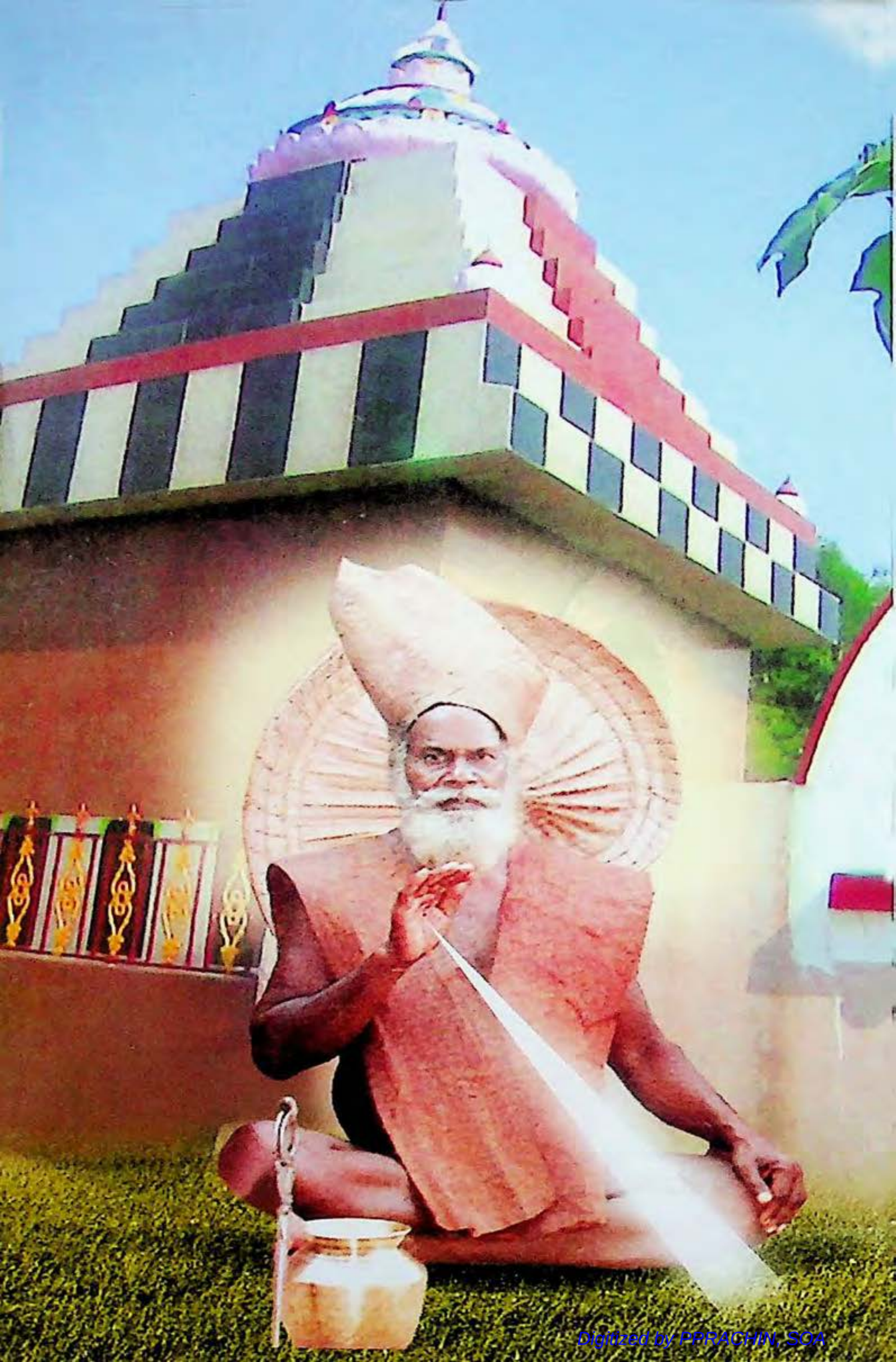
MAHIMA PAPERS

KUNJA BIHARI BABA
MEMORIAL VOLUME - 1



mahima papers

Dr. Satyananda Swain

MAHIMA PAPERS

Author Dr. Satyananda Swain, M.A. Ph.D.
Mahimayana, CDA, Sector-10, D.1551
Abhinaba Bidanasi, Cuttack-753014,
Odisha, India

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At- Mahimayana, Ctc-14

ANJALI BEHERA
Minister,
Women & Child Development,
Orissa

Tel. Office:(0674)2536620
Res. : 2534880
PABX-: 232-2191

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

"Mahima Dharma" is a way of life followed by millions of men and women of Odisha and its neighboring states i:e Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Assam. The spiritual Order attracts attention of the world for its liberal humanism and altruistic philosophy. The followers believe in one indivisible creator (Alekha Mahima) and this Universe as His manifestation. So an individual's salvation rests on Universal salvation. A Mahima follower treats all other creatures as his fellow beings and shares his pain and gain. Truth, Non-Violence, love, non-possession, fearlessness etc are a few of the tenets of Mahima Philosophy. The followers of Mahima lead a noble, selfless life wishing all the best of creatures at large.

The mobile mendicants of Mahima order are embodiment of self sacrifice and austerity. They are scantily clad in loin cloth or bark of trees, move from place to place advising people to purify their mundane life without any wealth to fall back upon. They dream the world as a single room and work relentlessly for its better. Brahma Abadhuta (now Brahma bhuta) Kunja Behari Baba was Such a Sadhak. He lived as a Mahima Sanyasi and influenced the lives of thousands of men and women including mine with his spiritual glory.

He built tungi Ashrams in Central and Western Odisha, accepted disciples and followers in a large number who inherit the glorious tradition.

Fortunately I belong to this great tradition. My parents and parents-in-law followed and are still following the Mahima way. We belong to a place in Mahima annals connected with Mahima Swami. His Badi (walking stick)Barada(Palm-leaf umbrella) a lock of hair have been preserved in Hindol-Brahmapur tungi. The dhuni set up by him is still aflame. The Government of Odisha has recognized this place as a place of pilgrimage.

It is a matter of delight that Sadhu Dinabandhu Baba is bringing out a treatise, to commemorate the fond memory of Brahmabhuta Kunja Bihari Baba under Kunja Baba Memorial Volumes.

The first volume titled **Mahima Papers** comprises some research papers.

I am all hopeful, it will contribute largely to research on Mahima Dharma. I thank the writer and all associated with this spiritual and literary endeavour. I would be happy to associate myself with such publication in times to come.

Anjali Behera

ANJALI BEHERA

PREFACE

"MAHIMA PAPERS" comprises a few essays on Mahima philosophy and literature written at different points of time to meet the need of different occasions. I have arranged them in a manner to look like a book. This is in response to Sadhu Dinabandhu Das's instruction to write a book on Mahimà Dharma for the devotees of Mahima Dharma, whose mother tongue is not Odia. The essays have been written to be presented in seminars and published in journals as articles. Thanks are due to Indian centre for philosophical research, Orissa centre for cultural studies, University grants commission; Utkal University, Mahima Dharmalochana parishad, and the collector cuttack for inspiration and assistance for writing of these papers.

My joy knows no bounds to know that *Mahima Papers* is being published as the 1st instalment of Kunjabihari Baba memorial volumes. I pay tribute to Mahima Swami; and Kunja Bihari Baba for their grace for publication of this book. Sadhu Dinabandhu Das, the general editor of the proposed volumes and Smt. Anjali Behera the publisher demand no less thanks.

I hope, the readers will have glimpses of Mahima Dharma through this book.

Mahimayana S. Swain

Editor's Note

My Guru, Brahmalina Kunja Behari Baba was a saint self-realised. He realised the presence of the Supreme Being in the lowest of beings and smallest of things. He identified himself with the suffering humanity. So, he gave up the pleasure of all sorts and embraced the austere ways of Mahima mendicants. He instructed the fellow humans the ways of enlightenment. In order to mitigate the sufferings of the disabled he set up a school for the dumb and the blind, served his guru with complete devotion and loved his disciples intensely. He set up tabernacles (tungis) and ashrams for his fellow mendicants and their followers. He lived a selfless life and contributed a lot for the better of the Mahima order. To-day he is free from the mortal frame but his memory lives in the mind of the people who had the good fortune of coming in his contact.

Abadhuta Kunja Behari Baba preferred the woodlanders to the towns folk. He gave weightage to the appeal of the devotees over his personal safety. An instance from his life will justify the statement:-

In 1991, the Baba was moving about in Bangomunda region. It was a hot summer afternoon. A devotee from Chhatisgarh fell at the Baba's feet and invited him to Bindra Nayagarh Paria, Sandubari of Devog district. It was 500kms to the west of the place of meeting. At first the Baba was reluctant but as the devotee insisted, the Baba gave his consent. Once the consent given, there was no question of retreat. He started the journey with four of his disciples : Madhu, Dinabandhu,Buddhadev and Krupasindhu. The route to the devotee's place was unknown. Besides, tigers and bears were at large. Nobody dared to come out of their houses. Houses were not too many beside the jungle

path either. With single-minded faith, the baba moved on. A devotee of Neilija village accompanied other four. There was no drinking water along the road. We collected water from dry river beds digging small pits. The sign-boards at intervals frightened us as they suggested the presence of tigers and elephants around. We moved on timidly till sunset. We spent the first night in a village school at Terenga. The people there were surprised as we trod the dangerous path. The Baba explained. "We have dedicated ourselves to the welfare of the mankind. We are afraid of none, we will move on till the goal in reached." Besides. The Baba proposed to move on in the night as the day was horribly hot. We shrank at the prospect. But the Baba moved on and we followed. We reached Paria munda at about 9 p.m. covering 18 Kilomtres. The Baba had the conviction that no animal would harm us as long as we were nonviolent." In the ancient times the yogis and saints were living among animals wearing bark of trees. We do the same. This bark is the banner of spiritual heroisms. None will be able to harm us as long as it is with us", explained the Baba. He took strips of bark and lighted it on the way to keep away the wild beasts. He succeeded in reaching the destination walking in the jungle for 20 days. People of the area thronged the place. They took the Baba as Lord Rama Chandra in exile. The Baba performed the Mahima Mela, About ten people embraced Mahima Dharma. The Baba took up this adventure to teach us that the spiritual journey is always painful but it grants happiness enough, hard to explain.

Abadhuta Kunja Behari Baba's teachings are timeless. His experiment in Mahima order is matchless. In order to cater the great values he upheld ,we publish "Mahima-Papers". We are confident it will contribute a lot to the welfare of people at large.

Sadhu Dinabandhu Das



Introduction

If "Religion is a worship of higher powers from a sense of need," Mahima Dharma is not just one of the religions preached and practised by mankind. Of course, the followers of Mahima Swami believe in the existence of a higher power called Alekh Mahima deemed to be 'the be all and end-all' of the universe. He pervades everywhere in equal measure. So He is not confined to any idols or symbols. The Mahima followers do not worship in the traditional method offering fruit, flower sweets or anything else. They offer themselves completely to the Creator. They are nothing for themselves. They do not follow this way of life out of greed or need. They pray for protection and salvation of the universe and the universal beings. Mahima Dharma encourages its followers to be rational and examines the intellectual factors of the spiritual order. Hence, "Mahima Dharma",is a spiritual way of life with a difference.

The followers of Mahima Dharma believe in One, all powerful higher entity. He, according to this philosophy is the unseen, indivisible one and eternal this vast universe is nothing but the aura of his greatness. He is called Alekha Mahima, Sunya Purusha. For the redemption of mankind He had manifested for a short period of time.

In order to realise Him the devotees have to concentrate on Him. He controls the activities of the universe, unseen pervasive and unheard. The devotees conscious of the all pervsive power of the almighty

embrace the world as the game of the Creator. Scholars compare Him to Brahma (Supreme Being) of the Upanishadas as the "unmoved mover". He is not a god. Devotees surrender themselves to this great power for the protection of the universe as individual salvation depends on this universal welfare. So Mahima Dharma prohibits worship of any other power.

Though the Mahima-followers do not worship, they have a spiritual code of conduct to communicate with this Supreme Lord. The devotees get up long before sunrise, take bath and offer seven times obeisance (saptabara sarana darshana) to Him. They pray ardently for preservation of mankind and their habitat, this world. They do not aspire for personal benefit. That's why Mahima Dharma is otherwise known as niskama dharma (cult of desirelessness) His work is righteousness. The followers of Mahima Dharma discharge their duties ungrudgingly. For them, this work is worship. No specific work has been assigned to Mahima followers. People do their parental job as they are advised to keep up the tradition of the nation. Noble virtues like truth, peace, kindness, non-violence, cleanliness untouchability, faithfulness, non-stealing, palate control, celibacy, universal love etc control their activities. Before sunset, the Mahima followers eat their dinner and offer five-time prayer (panchabar sarana darshana) to Mahima Alekh. After this, they sing bhajanas in praise of Mahima-Alekh and go to bed early, to get-up in the next morning to resume work, Brahma Karma. In the evening they say their prayer facing west.

The followers of Mahima have a collective sense of need. As men and women of flesh and blood Mahima

followers have their basic need but they do not make prayer for their fulfillment. They pray for universal welfare instead. Ultimately the individual appeal is addressed. The Mahima followers think of others first and there after they think about their own fate. Thus, they are altruists. In this light the needs of the people are so many. The tender heart of the devotees beat painfully for the suffering lot. So they chant the incantation composed by Bhima Bhoi.

Monumental miseries of men
who can witness and endure ?
May my soul be condemned
for universal welfare.

(Stuti Chintamani)

Salvation of universal beings is the aim of an individual Mahima follower. So he should be aware of his duties and responsibilities. He is guided more by his intellect than by an external interpreter. Mahima Dharma has done away with the intermediary in the field of Brahma Sadhana. So "worship without the priest" is the Mahima -method. The "guru-shisya" interface is the desired result. When a layman or a mendicant realises the all pervasive nature of the Guru he is enlightened. He fails to do anything wrong. Though theoretically Mahima Dharma rejects worship, there are some performance closer to ancient forms of religious activities. Brahma Dhuni has been lighted by the founder of this order, Mahima Swami. That is extant in Dhuni Mandir at Joranda. The wandering mendicants light Dhuni almost in every tungi they put up at. On the 14th day of the bright half of every month Ghee-wickers are lighted in tungi Ashramas. Some times on special occasions Akhanda Bati

is lighted at individuals' homestead to dispel the darkness of despondency. Followers believe in its spiritual power.

Amania is the name given to Mahima offering. It is indigenous food made of flattened rice, gura, ghee, milk, curd, honey, banana and coconut. A sweet paste is made of these ingredients and put in an earthen pot. A devotee shouts "Jagata Bhagata raksha Karantu guru Mahima Alekh", while lifting up the pot Skyward. Then it is distributed among children. A person who organises does not eat it. There lies the secret of absolute sacrifice.

Mahima Dharma has reduced rituals to the minimum. The Mahima followers organise marriage of their wards in simplest possible way. The bride and groom take oath of credibility in presence of the babas and the parents. Akhanda bati is lighted and Amania is distributed among children. The babas are invited and offered Bhiksha in all sacred occasions. Thus Mahima Dharma becomes non-ritualistic. This is conscious the protestant nature of the order. With its rational practice and age old philosophy Mahima Dharma appeals to the lay men and the scholars at the same time.



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MAHIMA DHARMA : A SPIRITUAL MASS MOVEMENT

Mahima Dharma is a spiritual uprising in Orissa. Though the term 'Dharma' has been appended to it, Mahima Dharma is not just another cult preached and practised in Orissa. It is a mass-movement launched in Orissa for social reform and liberation of the socially backward, culturally-outcast, economically exploited and ritually harassed people with non-violent ways through spiritual realisation and passive resistance. Interestingly enough long before Mahatma Gandhi propagated these as his weapons Mahima followers had embraced them as their way of life. They believe through enlightenment of an individual, lost in encircling gloom, society could be cultured through creation of awareness among the people. Exploitation could be resisted through performance of acts beneficial to the individual and society at large and salvation could be attained.

Mahima Swami, the propagator of this novel-way of life, emerged from the void in the holy city of Puri, in Orissa in 1826 A.D. He moved about the principal places of pilgrimage like Bhubaneswar, Khandagiri, Dhauligiri, Konark and Kapilash for about 24 years almost unknown to the people of the mainland as He chose his route through the dense forest. Through introspection and enquiry, he could realise that the places of pilgrimage had become the centres of priestly exploitation. People were being misled to the world of ignorance. They were being intimidated by the priests with royal patronage. People, particularly, ones at the grass root level were

getting restless to escape. They were chanting. "Whither shall we flee, where shall we go ?" Taking this, as an opportunity Christian missionaries engaged themselves in the acts of conversion. The tribal people and the untouchables embraced Christianity to save themselves from the priestly torture. The educated, enlightened ones followed suit out of disgust. Hinduism was at the cross-road of faith. Mahima Swami lighted the lamp of Eternal Consciousness (Brahma Agni) at Joranda, 25 kms. away from Dhenkanal in Orissa (now the principal place of Mahima Dharma) in 1850 and accepted followers form society for the propagation of this new way of life that protested against the social order for its protection, through peaceful means. It may be regarded as a remedial measure for Hinduism.

While wandering in the remote jungle tracks of Orissa, Mahima Swami initiated Gobinda Baba and Bhima Bhoi into his order as the first wandering mendicant (Paribrajak Sanyasi) and, poet-propagator an lay-disciple (grihastha) respectively. They preached the philosophical tenets and refined way of life and attracted followers into their respective orders. Mahima Swami stood as the arch adviser of the order. Kings like Bhagirathi Bhramarbar of Dhekanal, the crown prince of Keonjhar and the king of Bauda, for example, became ardent devotees of Mahima Swami. The propagators had to encounter opposition from all quarters of the Hindu and Christian world for their frank rebellious steps but they did not give in. Their effort could enlighten people and they embraced the order out of love. This order has been gaining ground since then and millions have been accepting Mahima Dharma as a way of life for its

philosophical authenticity and a lifestyle, both practical and peaceful.

The followers of Mahima Dharma believed in One Maker, Alekha Parama Brahma. He is one indivisible, unseen and Supreme, the Omnipresent, Omniscient and the Omnipotent. He is not, one of the gods, envisaged by the Vedas to be worshipped. The Supreme Being is to be realized as the be all and end all of the creation. He is Truth and none can be safely false under His nose (as He is Omniscient). To be truthful one has to be fearless and He is Abhaya Brahma and the generator of courage, Fearlessness. A Mahima follower has to be non-violent as the entire universe is the part and parcel of the Brahma and He resides in one and all. Bhima Bhoi explains this ideal. "Wherever I look at the worms and insects the movable and the immovable intently, I realize "He is to be equally present in all and they can't be thought of separately. (***Stuti Chintamani***)

This equality-concept compels a Mahima follower to be compassionate. He can not hurt anyone for his own pleasure; rather he comes forward to sacrifice himself for the welfare of the world at large. Bhima Bhoi pronounces the principal tenets of Mahima Dharma :-

How can one watch endure
The listless misery of creatures !
May my soul face damnation
For the salvation of the Creation.

..(**Stuti Chintamani**)

Thus, Mahima Dharma propagates universal brotherhood, and a Mahima follower, (Shakespeare-heroine in the Tempest Miranda-like) suffers when he sees others suffer. It is his sole aim to transform the world into

a single home. In Bhima Bhoi's terms "Brahmandaku Kariachhi Ghara bakhuri" (I have turned this universe into a single room")

Embracing the world as a single home a Mahima mendicant wanders about from place to place shouting the slogan for the welfare of the world and the devotees (Jagata bhagata Mangal heu). He does not, however, share any one's house. He puts up at a Tungi exclusively built up for mendicants or in any public place like schools, club houses etc. In the evening he explains these genial rules to the followers and leaves for another village with the same purpose in the next morning. He puts on saffron cloth at the initial stage of sanyasa and puts on kumbhi-bark when he attains perfection. He carries a palm-leaf as an umbrella and a palm-leaf bag to carry books; a Khajani and pair of ginies to recite Mahima Bhajana to its accompaniment Mahima Sanyasies travel in groups of two or three for this purpose. They sing Bhima Bhoi's Bhanjans in praise of the Lord. Devotees Jayakrishna and Khaga have written meaningful songs that the Babas sing. They do not possess any property, movable or Immovable. The senior mendicants do not touch cash even. They keep themselves away from women and all the pleasure- giving things. Mahima mendicants are expected to be perfect celibates. For them, women are mothers and they expect only food from them. They do not touch women. Women are not allowed to enter tungi even for learning and prayer. The Mahima mendicants live among men like lotus in slime unattached, unstained. They guide men in their way for terrestrial peace and celestial salvation. They set examples that the lay-disciples follow.

The Mahima lay-disciples follow pious lives. They lead a life of cleanliness and sacrifice. They believe in the concept of "plain living and high thinking". They, like their preceptors, getup long before the sunrise and take bath. They perform sarana darshan for seven-times. They take their breakfast, a little after sun-rise and get ready for their work. They discharge their duties honestly. They take a break in the midday for another short sarana darshana programme and lunch. They work till the evening and eat their dinner before sun-down. A little after sunset they say their evening prayer with five-fold sarana darshana. They sing bhajana and read good books and retire early to bed to get up early in the next morning.

Mahima followers eat simple vegetarian food. They put on saffron-coloured dress and entertain Mahima mendicants. They are expected not to lie, cheat, steal nor indulge in sexual irregularities. They should have sex with their wives only to procure babies. Their lives are sex restricted though not sex-free. Like their mendicant preceptor their salvation lies in universal salvation, "welfare of the world of beings." They pray for the salvation of the world at large that involves their personal deliverance. A Mahima mendicant does not work as an intermediary between Man and his Maker. He works as a guide in the path of enlightenment. He asks his followers to live a life of austerity and sacrifice and corrects them when they make mistakes. In return, the disciples look after him.

The mendicants and the lay-disciples assemble once every year at Joranda-Mahima Gadi a day before the full-moon night of Magha. This has become the centre

of Mahima Dharma as Mahima Swami had lighted the Brahma Dhuni here before He propagated Mahima Dharma which is still burning in the Dhunimandir. Mahima Swami has been consigned to earth there. The Gadi Mandir stands on that point. The Mahima mela continues for a week. The mendicants and the lay-disciples return to the country for their assigned personal duties for universal welfare.

Apart from these, Mahima followers light lamps every evening and every month end without fail in their prayer places. They feed children with amania on every Gurupurnima morning. Thus, they spread goodwill and fellow-feeling among their neighbours. They believe in peaceful co-existence. They don't fall out with their fellow beings over silly matters. They don't believe in fake ways for fortune making. They believe in action and firmly believe in its veracity. They attach little importance to the fruits of action.

Mahima way of life is relevant to all the people for their peace and progress as it is pragmatic. It has its place in the field of revolution in the traditional life. It rejects superstitions and does not allow its devotees to accept anything without the sanction of rational consideration. So, it is not just another cult or way of worship, rather it is a way of life open to one and all, irrespective of caste and creed. By embracing Mahima one does not lose one's caste. He need not convert to Mahima to be a Mahima follower. One has to embrace this path of light to be enlightened.

Mahima Dharma paves a path for a prosperous society that believes in humanism as the supreme law of life in a blissful world without narrow discrimination.



MAHIMA DHARMA : A BRIEF SURVEY

Mahima Dharma is the only religious movement that Odisha, the meeting ground of all religions, claims its own. This latest religious movement embodies all the essential attributes of religions in general, hitherto preached and practised. As it highlights on the glories of righteousness, (Dharma Mahima) it is called *Mahima Dharma,* besides the fact that it is named after its founder *Mahima Swami.* Naturally, therefore, this faith has close semblance of other prominent faiths and, that leads scholars to misrepresent the totally new religious movement as "crypto Buddhism", perverted Jainism", "Neo-vaishnavism" or "refined Hinduism" consequent upon hasty observation from outside. Though Mahima Dharma accepts age old values that humanity upholds, it improves upon them in philosophy and practice. All the changes have been brought in, to make it suitable to the changing order of time. A close study of Mahima philosophy, literature and practice proves Mahima Dharma an original religious faith based on humanism.

Mahima Swami, the founder of Mahima Dharma appeared on the broad road (Bada Danda) of Puri in 1826. He was popularly known as Dhulia Gosain as he was smeared with dust and was recklessly rolling on the dust of the road of the pilgrimage. He attracted the

attention of the scholars and elite when He solved a Brahma-related riddle of the pundits of Mukti mandap. Thereafter He meditated in different places of Odisha including, Arkagumpha, Khandagiri and propagated the Alekh Brahma Theory. According to Him Alekh Brahma the be all and end all of this creation is One, indivisible unqualified and One without attributes. He is shapeless and is invisible. He is unknowable and only one can realise Him with concentrated meditation and close observation of earthly and unearthly transactions that control human lot . Brahma is without attributes. One has to practise certain virtues to realise the Absolute. Interestingly enough, Bhima Bhoi ascribes certain virtues to Alekh Brahma as follows :

Brahma siddhi ata karma siddhi ata,
satya siddhi adi kari
Daya siddhi ata, kshama siddhi ata.
Santi piddhi achhipuri
Veda siddhi ata veda siddhi ata
Jnana siddhi paripurna
Moksha siddhi niddhi at Mahaprabhu
Bahichha Alekh a nama.

(Stuti Chintamani)

Perfection in Brahma realisation is possible only through attainment of perfection in righteousness. Truth, pity, mercy, peace, knowledge, wisdom are the resort of solvation and for that reason He is known as **Alekh** the indescribable, non-god.

The idea of Brahma is not new to Indian philosophy. Vedanta has expounded the concept quite clearly.

Badarayan, in his **Brahma Sutra** has equated Brahma with Nada or sound element. He opines that the Nada is progenitor of everything on this earth including the earth itself. But Mahima philosophy does not accept this **Nada-Brahma** theory. The philosophers of this school pleaded that sound itself is created and thus it cannot be the sole creator. Brahma is, therefore, something beyond that. It is pure and non-dual i.e. creator and created. Hence, Mahima philosophy pleads in favour of Bisuddha advaita (Pristine Non-dualism) Followers of Mahima order believe this Brahma as the progenitor, sustainer and the dissolver of the things and beings. Hence, this world is His glory (Mahima or Bibhuti) to realise Brahma one has to realise the reality and act accordingly. So the Mahima wandering mendicants move about in the world of men. They guide the people at large in the way of spiritual realisation without getting entangled with the world at large. In a nutshell, they love the world without being of it. The lay-disciples of Mahima order are taught non-attachment too. They practise *nishanga karma yoga*. Living simply they aim at the attainment of the highest.

Dharma or righteousness for Mahima followers is based on self-control and consequently wishing the best of their fellow beings. For control of mind and body the followers are advised restricted sex life only for procreation of a child. Overindulgence in sex even with a married partner is deemed sinful. Bhima Bhoi's contention in this connection is quite interesting and remarkable :-

gurudharma uthu kaliguga tutu
satya dharma karma badhu
kahe Bhima Bhoi etiki maguni
Kandarpa badha na padu

(Stuti Chintamani)

For the growth of Gurudharma i.e. Mahima Dharma, and mitigation of the evil powers of Kaliyuga control of sexuality is essential. Hence, Bhima Bhoi prays his Lord for the destruction of sexual impediments. Mahima monks are given the path of absolute celibacy where as the lay disciples are given the command for controlled sex-life.

To be a celibate one has to practise restraint in food habit and dress habit. Both Mahima monks and disciples eat frugal meals mostly free from non-vegetarian food stuff. However, they are not food fanatics. The disciples put on saffron cloth and upper garments; the sadhu-bairagies put on loin cloth of the same colour and the abadhutas put on bark of the trees, particularly Kumbhi pata. They observe morning evening prayers that involve a lot of physical exercise. They prostrate 7 times facing east and 5 times facing west long before sun rise and after sunset respectively. They do not worship sun god though their prayer corroborates with sun rise and sunset. They perform morning prayer before the sun rise and evening prayer just after the sunset.

After sundown the Mahima Tungis (Rest sheds for the wandering Mahima Mendicants) become active. The disciples and the monks sing the glory of Mahima Swami to the accompaniment of gini and Khanjani .Mostly they sing the bhanjans written by Bhima Bhoi, Jai

Krishna and Narana, all lay disciple poets. Some bhajans by leading babas are chanted now.

The Brahma Dhuni is lighted on the tungi compound on he 14th day (chaturdasi) in particular. Ghee is given to the Dhuni (fire wood). But it must not be mistaken as yajna or fire worship. The aim and objective of such practice is to keep the atmosphere pure and the environment, pollution-free. The following morning sweetened flattened rice is distributed among children. That is called Balya lila for children's satisfaction. Children are considered pure and in their pleasure, lays the pleasure of the great Lord. (Maha prabhu).

The wandering mendicants assemble at Joranda Mahima Gadi once in a year on the day before the full moon of Magha. The day marks the beginning of propagation Mahima movement. The devotees come in large number to pay their homage to the memory of Mahima Swami who performed all his spiritual lilas there. The Dhunimandir still preserves the Brahma Dhuṇi lighted by Mahima Swami.

Mahima Dharma is spreading day by day as odisha's mass religion or *Loka Dharma*. Scholars at home and abroad have started giving attention to this religious movement that embodies all the old and new in its philosophy and practice. Mahima Dharma, the experiment in truth and nonviolence for the better of human lot has its relevance to the nuclear threatened world.



MAHIMA DHARMA : A STUDY IN PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Mahima Dharma is a reformative socio-religious movement that broke out in Orissa in mid-nineteenth century-prior to the time of organisation of Brahmo Samaj in Eastern India and that of Arya Samaj in Western India. While Raja Ram Mohan Roy gave rationalistic approach to the religious practices, Swami Dayananda aimed at the revival of pure Vedic knowledge in English. Mahima Swami, on the other hand, gave a set of commands that echoed pure Vedantic knowledge in general and unalloyed non-dualism in particular. While Brahmo and Arya movements were confined to the educated middle class, Mahima movement influenced the grass root. Though tens of thousands of devotees practise Mahima Dharma, little has been recorded in the annals of the nation.

Mahima Swami manifested in Puri, the meeting ground of all faiths but moved into the tribal belt of Orissa where conversion was rampant. He picked up his first Sanyasi follower (Adi Siddha) Govinda Baba on the top[4] of Kapilas hill and accompanied him to Rairakhole where He met Bhima Bhoi the first poet of Mahima order. Towards the end of this tour, He set up Brahma Dhuni there at Joranda and pronounced His commands for universal wellbeing, through religious reforms that has been spreading from the remote areas to the cities. Mahima Dharma aims at establishing truthful philosophical

knowledge through religious practices. Though this truth had been discovered centuries back, it was confined to books and Mahima Swami put it into practice and established the distinctiveness in Mahima philosophy.

Mahimites believe in one, non-dual, Brahma whom they adore as Guru Brahma Mahima Alekha. He is one without a second, non-dual, indivisible, without attribute, stainless, (Eka, Advaita, aveda, nirguna, niranjan etc.). Seers have tried to ascertain Him in different ways. Srimad Bhagavad Gita records in this connection :-

"Rushibhi barhudha gitam Chhandobhi Virvidei Pruthak, Brahma sutra padei schaiva Hetumedvi vinischetei. (XIII-4)"

This has been sung by rishies in several ways, in various distinctive chants, in passages indicative of Brahma, full of reasoning and convincing. We have tried to cite some such examples from scriptures of India to ascertain oneness of Brahma. Mundaka Upanishad states :

Yat *tadadrusyam grahyam*
Agotramabarnam achakshu strotatn
Tada apanipadam
Nityam bibhum, sarvagatatn susukhmam
Tadavayam yat bhuta Yonin
Paripashyanti dhirah. *(1-6)*

That the indivisible, that the unseizable, without connections, without hue, without eye or -ear, that which is without hands, feet eternal, all pervading, which is in all things and impalpable, that which is imperishable that which is the womb of creatures sages behold everywhere.

Bhima Bhoi, the first poet of Mahima Dharma resounds the upanishadic observation in the following lines :

Pada pani nahin tanku dhariba kie

Emanta Brahma Swarupa dekha najae

x x x x

Nahin Mukha, Jihwanasa,

Uttara Nadie bhasa

x x x x

Nahitanka varna china Ashesh ruparu bhinna.

Sakal dharma vidhana karanti naye.

He is without feet and hands ,who can catch hold of Him, Such is the nature & Brahma, That can never be seen.

x x x x

He has neither ears nor eyes to hear and see He has neither tongue nor nose, But in no words He replies.

x x x x

He has neither colour nor trace, he is above all shapes and size, He prescribes all the canons of justice.

(Atha Bhajan)

This is but a single example of Bhima Bhoi's vision of Brahma in the vast world of devotional poetry. Mahima Swami granted Bhima Bhoi extra-ordinary poetic power and the unlettered blind disciple of Mahima showed his fellow devotees the nature of their object of meditation and pointed out His acumen in his Bhajanas, Janans and above all in his master-piece, **Stuti Chintamani.**

This, One formless Bhrahma is the progenitor of this world of forms. Upanishada observes :

Yathornanabhistantu nochared

Yathagne Kshudra-Visphulinga Vichafanti

ebamebasma sarveprana sarvelokah,

sarvedehah Sarvani bhutani visivam.

(Mundaka 1-6)

As the spider puts out and gathers in, as herbs spring up upon the earth, as the hair of head and body gorw from living man, so here all are born from the immutable (Brahma).

Mahima Dharma has the similar view of the creation. Guru Brahma Alekha is the source of creation of all the beings and objects : Mahimites believe :

Mahima namati yehu sarva bolauchhi

Sriangaru koti kotijanma karauchi,

Mahima namati yahu sakshatare dharma

Agacha gavirase atai purna Brahma

Mahima garvarujata hela tinipur

Swarga martya ghenihela patalbimbar

Mahima garbharujata Mahi-'o'-Dharitri

Mahima garbharujata sthiti utapati.

(Stuti Chintamani, Chapter-7)

This One, indivisible Brahma, is everywhere realised in His creation in all His creatures and objects by an intuitive mind free from prejudices. Kathopanishad observes :-

Esa sarvesu bhutesu gudhatma na prakasate

Drusyate tivagraya budhya sukskmaya sukshma darshivih. *(1-3-12)*

"He is the Secret Self in all existence and does not manifest Himself to the vision: Yet He is seen by the seers

of the subtle by a subtle and perfect understanding". Bhima Bhoi states :

Ghate ghate achhi he na disuchhi

(He is there in every object and very being but He is not seen)

Chihni bhajile jnana netre dishibe

(He can be seen through the inner eye if one realises Him and meditates upon)

This world of from is but His spark *"Abhasa ebacha"*

(Vedanta Sutra 2-3-50)

Bhima Bhoi realises :

Sakalajivare mishi, eka rupa praya dishi

Tanku kehi sari nuhen tini brahmande

(Bhajanamala)

(Mingling with all the beings, He takes after all but He has no peer in these three worlds)

This proves that the world of appearance is the reflection of the Real. Hence conscious of His existence the conscious minds should try to move upward. This gap between man and his Maker has to be bridged conscience only. Only through eternal vigilance with 'hetu', 'acheta' one can realise the Real and free oneself from bonds of all sorts.

A Mahimite's approach to the world of objects, therefore, is detached (Nisanga). Living in the world with a sense of detachment one can realise the Real. Ishopanishad points out:

Ishavasyam Idam Sarvam

Yatkincha "Yagatyam yagat,

Tena tyaktena bhunjitha

Ma gridha Kasyasvid dhanam.

All there is the abode of the Lord, Whatsoever is there is in the eternal motion. By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy: lust not after any man's possession. Bhima Bhoi points out to the followers of Mahima :

SthabaruYangama, Kitaru Patanga

Chahin dele anusari,

Sakala ghatare puri samanare

Nuhen sanabada kari.

(Stuti Chintamani)

Looking intently at the static and dynamic, the insects and the loctus, I realise His existence everywhere equally, and hence ,I can not make any discrimination.

Therefore, *'I give up all, and gain all'*

"Samarpi deli paili sarba."

(Bhajanamala)

In simpler terms a conscious being gives up attachment with the transitory and seeks the Real. Realisation of the Real grants him solace and salvation. Mahima Swami set examples before the World and Mahimites pursue them in practice.

Marking this striking resemblance between "the supreme work of Indian mind" and the commands of Mahima Swami, despite the big gap of time of millenia, Brahmalina Viswanath Baba wrote bhajans, like "**Sadhu-Giti**", treatise like **Chinmaya Brahma Gita, Mahima Dharma Itihasa, Mahima Dharma Pratipadak** and the magnum opus "**Sarva Veda Vedanta Saratatva Siromani, Alekha Param Brahma Darshanam**. He made a comparative study of Mahima Swami's command expressed in practice, Bhima Bhoi's poem vis-a-vis the

teachings of vedanta, just to do away with religous superstitions that had crept into the world of Brahma Sadhana, "realisation of the Real". He made an in-depth study of the scriptures of India and meditated upon the nature of the Real throughout his life that spanned over a century. The entire bequest he left for us is rich and useful enough for our deep deliberation. He has reached a conclusion in all his books that Mahima Dharma is based on, Visuddha Advaita, unalloyed non-dualism.

Comparing and contrasting the commands of Mahima Swami with almost all the religious scriptures of India, Viswanath Baba concludes that Mahima Dharma Darshan is closer to the findings of vedantists in general and non-dualists in particular. But he could discover" *some* subtle difference from the advait schools hitherto established. While Advaita Philosophers like Sankara established the fact that there is something called *maya* that interferes between man and his Marker, Jiva and Brahma as the immediate cause of creation, Viswanath Baba did not discover any such hurdle. He establishes that Mahima Alekha is self established and the created world is but His semblance (abhasa)

Baba wrote :

Mahima Swakiyana Yasya Pratistha
Visudham na cha dvaita bhavatn
dadhanam
Abamagocharam nirmalam nirvishesam
Parambrahma yat tat saranyam namami

I seek anchorage in One who is self effulgent, pure, non-dual and beyond description, the indivisible Supreme Brahman.

Hence Baba asserted a name for Mahima Dharma Darshan, *Visudha Advait* on the grounds that

1) Mahima is One and unalloyed.
2) Way leading to Him is one called asadhana marga non-ritualistic way,
3) Mahima and His creation is one and hence it is not totally asat as the manifestation of Sat.

Some scholars consider the term "Mahima" has been used in place of Maya by Viswanath Baba. But I submit that Mahima is the Supreme entity and not the attribute of the Real where as Maya is the created attribute of Brahma. While Maya has a negative connotation, Mahima is positive. While Sankara asks the seekers to annihilate maya to interface the Real, Viswanath Baba instructs to be engrossed in Mahima. In the words of Bhima Bhoi, 'Mahimare nimaja' Maya is both Sat and Asat and is the creator of false and untenable things. Mahima on the other hand is Satchidananda is the giver of knowledge and devotion. Biswanath Baba adores Him as "Jnana Mukti data guru". So, One can not be fully replaced by the other. Brahma is one and self-effulgent. He can be realised through introspection and rational deliberation. The nagative predictions like 'neti' 'neti' nor chanting of 'oum' can lead one anywhere. Hence, one should surrender to realise the all pervading nature of the supreme Brahma with Baba :-

Sruti nerti netyadi bachabhramanti
Sivarupam Yadiyam na namapa betti
Yadonkar gamyam kwachineb kale
Param brahma yat tat saranam namami

(4)

In Oriya Bhajan Baba surrenders :
Taba Abhasa, ejiva dasa

(Thy spark this life,is but your slave)

For a Mahimite, therefore, devotion (Bhakti) is more important than knowledge (Jnana). Without deep devotion one can not attain true knowledge (brahma jnana). Bhima Bhoi states :-

Bina bhaktire he prapata nuhain Sada Jnana.

(Bhajanamala)

Mahimites, according to Viswanath Baba should realise Brahma as unalloyed and non-dual (Vishuddha Advaita). They have to keep their minds free from prejudice hence pure. They must not adore any form at any time as the substitute of the Absolute. Mahima followers are, therefore, prohibited from going on pilgrimage. This is a measure to keep the mind of the devotees free from distraction of any sort, mundane or divine.

The distinctiveness of Mahima Dharma lies more in its practice than in its philosophy. Watching a Mahimite's life style one can realise the uniqueness of the order. The cardinal tenet of Mahima Dharma is universal well being (Jagata Bhagata Mangal). A Mahimite must think and work for the world of beings because there lies the salvation of the individual self. Bhima Bhoi articulates such aspiration of Mahima Dharma : *Praninka arata dukha apramita Dekhu dekhu keva sahu; Mo Jivana pachhe narke padithau Jagata udhar heu."*

(How can one watch and bear creatures' limitless distress and woes ? May my soul be dammed to hell for, the salvation of the world)

To attain this goal of mass redemption- one need not be free from society. One has to live in it and work for its betterment. Mahima Swami prohibited the

sanyasies (the wandering Mahima mendicants) from retiring to the forest retreats for attainment of salvation of their souls. On the otherhand, He commanded the sanyasies to wander from place to place catering knowledge. Hence, they can not stick to a particular place for more than one night. They can not eat more than once with a particular family. Thus, they won't be attached to a particular set of people. Thus the Mahima Sanyasies live in society without being of it, like lotus-leaves in water.

Mahima Dharma has set a reverse order in guru-shisya tradition. Here a preceptor seeks a true aspirant disciple. Mahima Swami went all the 'way to Bhima Bhoi's cottag to endow him with poetic prowess. To-day Mahima Mendicants move from place to place in search of disciples. Bhima Bhoi marked the dearth of disciples and observed:

Jagate guru ude shisya nahanti kehi
Badima pane sarve dinajauchhi bahi.

The preceptor has manifested there in the world but there is no disciples. Every one spends life time in vanity.

But sanyasies cater the eternal knowledge among common folk and arouse their dormant sprit from spiritual inertia.

Mahima Dharma liberates religious practices from ritual overdose. A Mahimite need not chant any mantra for worshipping his deity.

He need not take the help of any priest for such worship. He need not worship at all. A Mahimite follows austre way of life (niyama nistha) and surrenders himself to the lord through sarana darshana. Austerity includes

celibacy, selflessness, punctuality, cleanliness, control over passions etc. Surrender stands for samarpana bhava. A devotee surrenders himself in total and gains everything thereby. Bhima Bhoi sings, *"Samarpideli paili sarva"* (I renounced and gained all). This line resounds *"tenatyaktena bhunjitha"* of **Ishopanishad** as we have quoted elsewhere.

Mahima Dharma is a religious order that has the singular aim : *"Welfare of man."* Bhima Bhoi emphatically puts, "Prani manakar ananda mangala anyare ki labha achhi ?" For attainment of this end constant war has to be waged against falsehood. Hence, Mahima Swami commanded His followers to be fearless and self-disciplined. Both the Sanyacis and the lay-disciples lead a punctual life with warm wishes for their fellow- beings. They deem the whole world as a single room. Bhima's observation,

"Brahmandaku Kariachhi ghara bakhuri" echoes vedantic observation, *"Vasudheiba Kutumbakam"*.

Ahimsa (Non-violence) Satya (truth), Shanti (peace), Daya (pity) are the noble virtues that a Mahimite has to practise in his day to day life. Conscious of the non-dual entity, Gurubrahma Mahima Alekha, equipped with self control and working for the welfare of the fellow beings any man can attain salvation. Mahima Dharma asserts equality of status to one and all through non-violent method. The most important fact about the order is that the knowledge that the vedantic seers have discovered millennia back is made available to the common men in their own language. Hence, a spiritual movement has already set for a better social order in the shape of Mahima Dharma.



MAHIMA DHARMA : A STUDY IN SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Mahima Dharma is the religion of the people (Loka Dharma) and the religion of our times (Yugadharma) preached in Odisha, the happy meeting ground of almost all the religious orders of the world. Though all the religious preceptors and priests have left lasting imprint on orissan cultural life, Mahima Dharma is the only religious order that Odias may claim as their own. As the latest religious order Mahima Dharma embraces all that is good in the older orders and discards all that go against humanity in the garb of spiritualism. As a human-centric religious movement, Mahima Dharma wages war against in human and irrational religious rites in clear-cut terms. While wishing best of all, the Mahimites register their protest against cunning religious malpractices. Mahima Dharma embodies the age- old values of India, her grand philosophical tradition and suggest rational values free of dogma to be upheld by men and women of our times. Though age-old values like truth, non-violence, celibacy, non-possession are prescribed for the performers of Mahima Dharma, there is distinctiveness in them in Mahima Philosophy and practice. With all these noble virtues as way of life Mahima Movement enjoys the status of Dharma. It is not just a cult that refers to a way of worship of a particular God or Goddess. There is no intricate way of worship in Mahima Dharma.

Besides, like all major Dharmas, Mahima Dharma has a founder a philosophy or a body of literature and a set of rules to guide its followers.

Mahima Swami, the founder of Mahima Dharma gave His commands of mass-redemption (jagata bhagata uddhara) in mid-nineteenth century while conversion was rampant. This order came into force as the starting point of Indian spiritual renaissance, (as Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj were organised later) both as a reformative and defensive movement within Hindu fold. It revived the Vedantic learning and tried to cleanse the dogmatic elements from the Hindu code of conduct denouncing expensive rituals. Thus he showed the educated people the area of light and reason . To the unlettered mass, he introduced a way of life that required little expenditure and greater freedom. Simple but controlled life style and deep insight into the realm of reality became essential for religious practice that aimed at salvation.

Mahima Swami endowed Bhima Bhoi with wonderful poetic prowess. This unlettered tribal sang the glory of his master and articulated the philosophical tenets of Mahima order in his innumerable bhajanas, jananas and stuties in his inimitable style. His poetic excellence and lyric grace grants incantative height to his creation. Beside Bhima Bhoi, Mahima mendicants in general and Brahmalina Biswanath Baba in particular have given a philosophical status to Mahima literature. The non-dualistic philosophy that the Mahimites practice is labeled as **Visuddha Advaita**, unalloyed non-dualism.

For the Mahimites Guru-Brahma Mahima Alekh is the be all and end all. He is one (eka) addwaya (non-dual) second to none (adwatiya) and indivisible (aveda), unalloyed (visuddha) and above all sat,chit,ananda (embodiment of truth, consciousness and happiness). He

is the Real. Through introspection can one realise the Real. Through Brahma Sadhana that includes bhakti (devotion), janana (knowledge) and karma (work without attachment) one can realise the Real that Supreme Brahma. Bhima Bhoi the gifted poet ascertains the nature of Mahima Dharma and Mahima Swami in the following lines of Stuti Chintamani:-

Nishabda Bhubana diksha dharma ehi nirbedara charachara, Alekha Mahima bolanti jahaku arupa tanka sharira. (86/16)

This dharma dhara issues from the soundless state and is performed in non-ritualistic manner. The Lord we call Alekha Mahima Is shapeless in nature. Mahima Dharma leads its followers to the apex, called Nishabda Bhubana a soundless state that creates sound or sabda pervades the sunya. Gradually myriad forms emerge from this sunya and the creation becomes full, Purna Bhima Bhoi explains :

Nishabada gharu anama shaktiru janama hoila sunya, Sunya sanchararu akara dhaila bahara hoila barna. (78/11)

There lies the distinctiveness of the philosophy of Mahima Dharma. A power unseen and unheard of, not the articulated sound or letter, is the cause of creation. Categorically Bhima Bhoi sings: Anakara basai na basi ekakshara/ the shapeless one, not the one lettered entity is the cause of creation and hence, this Supreme Reality should be meditated upon. Biswanath Baba adores this supreme reality while making clear the concept:

"Yadonkara gamyam kwachineb kale
param Bramha yat tat sarnyam namami."

I seek anchorage in one who is not comprehensible through omkara at any time. He is the Supreme. He is Real and He is Brahma. (Param Bramha Darshan-4). This Absolute Reality can only be realised through perfected virtues. Ascribing perfection to the Real, Bhima Bhoi proclaims:

'Brahma Siddhi ata Dharma Siddhi ata Satya Siddhi Achhi puri, '*Daya Siddhi ata* Kshyama Siddhi ata Santi Siddhi Addhi Kari. Veda Siddhi Ata Bheda Siddhi ata Gyana Siddhi Paripurna. Mokshya Siddhi Nidhi ata Mahapravu bahichha Alekha Nama. ***(Stuti.** 96/34)*

Thou art perfect, thou art Brahma, perfect dharma, perfect compassion, perfect peace perfect intelligence admitted by the Vedas established through contrast. O great Lord thou art the fountain head of salvation. Thou art Alekha (indescribable/non-god)

Alekh Mahima is self effulgent. This has been admitted down the ages. *Chhandogya Upanishad* observes "Mahimani Swakiena pratisthah/self established in his own glory. This world is but His semblance. Individuals are but sparks of this flame of consciousness. Upanishad admits "abhasa ebacha" (Vedanta Sutra). In one of his Jananas Biswanath Baba says:-

"Taba abhasa-e-Jiva dasa"

This life is but thy semblance and slave. Hence, this world of myriad form is but His reflection. We have to realise him through all these without being ensnared by them. Bhima Bhoi points out *'Ghate Ghate achhi he nadisuchhi.'* He is everywhere there unseen and *"Chihni Bhajile Jyana netre dishibe,'* He can be seen in the inner eyes if rightly perceived and meditated upon. Thus he resound's Katha Upanishad:

esa sarvesu bhutesu gudhatma na prekasate drisyate twagrahya buddhya sukshmaya sukshme drustibhih (1-3-12)

He is the secret self in all existences and does not manifest Himself to the vision: yet He is seen by seers of the subtle by a subtle and perfect understanding. A Mahimite is expected to treat the world around him with due care as it is the spread of the real. He makes no discrimination among beings. In Bhima Bhoi's consideration "*Atma bhagatire bheda bheda yebe barjra padu mo mundaku.*" May thunder strike my head if I make any discrimination in the devotion of self. A Mahimite, therefore is ***sama drasta***/impartial. He, like the seers of **Isha Upanishad** would state, "*Isavasyam idam sarvam*/all these are the abode of the Lord and hence *tena tyaktena bhunjutha*/enjoy without attachment. Bhima echoes, *samarpideli paili sarba,* I surrendered and gained all. This sense of detachment would enable a Mahimite to be non-violent. Mahima Dharma is basically based on truth and non-violence. Truth and non-violence are two-sides of a coin or in Gandhiji's consideration are synonymous. As uncompromising crusader against falsehood of all sorts, Bhima Bhoi says :

Ahimsa dharmare ashrakala jebe
ahimsare karo drudha
guru seva kahi himsa badihele
sunyaru padiba mada.

Be firm in non-violence if you seek anchorage in the non-violent way. You will be punished by providence if you resort to violence in the name of service to the Lord.

X X X

Khetri hoi jebe sastra na dhaile satru jayakari nuhe, guru namadhari sinharadi deba nathiba kahaku bhaye. (**Stuti** : 90/14)

X X X

Dhibara hoina mina marupache Mahimaku thaudhayayee, tahara bruti taku diajauchi kemante chadiba sehi. (**Stuti** : 91/11)

The idea of non-violence is novel in Mahima-Dharma. One can not be violent even in his thought against any body. One can not think ill of anybody else, but one can kill enemies in war if one is a warrior and, one can catch fish if one is a fisherman. This pragmatic philosophy of Mahima Dharma has been beautifully depicted by Bhima Bhoi as he realises its social necessity.

Mahima Dharma discards fanaticism. It is a religious order based on hetu (reason) and cheta (consciousness). So a Mahimite realises social realities and works for collective betterment. Mahima Dharma does not admit any class, caste discrimination. It rejects rituals and pilgrimage as the way to salvation. To people who are so beguiled Bhima Bhoi points out:

"na jani charidige pheru achhantitrtha brata adikari, jahinre lodile tahinchhanti Brahma bujiba jebe vichari. (Stuti)

Unwittingly you move about in four quarters on pilgrimage and fasting. Brahma is everywhere there, if you seek and realise reasoning.

To attain such height of consciousness and retain that height Mahimites have been asked to live an austre life. The followers of Mahima are both lay-disciples and wandering mendicants. The lay-disciples observe the Mahima code of conduct with a sense of self surrender.

They treat the wandering mendicants with love and respect. They serve the sanyasis with a frugal meal and learn a lot from them. They accommodate the sanyasis in a tungi specially built for them. The sanyasis are not given left over food and they do not outstay a day in a particular village. Sadhu seva is an integral part of a lay-disciple's life.

The Sanyasis do not accept food more than once from particular family. They observe celibacy completely. A young boy who is willing to be a Mahima sanyasi enters the fold of Mahima and observes the rules and regulation of the order with complete dedication. At first stage a sanyasi is called vairagi. When he proves his capacity, he is promoted to the status of a *sadhu*. Life becomes more austere gradually. One who suceeds in practice of non-attachment is given the (balkala) "*pindhanti brukshya balkala netre dekhuchha sakala.* This is the highest phase of Mahima order and a sanyasi is called *brahma abadhuta*. These sanyasis move about in society without being attached to any body in particular. Guest like they move about/*atithi praye bulanti dharama dande.* (Bhima Bhoi). They work like conscience keeper of the lay disciples.

Mahima lay-disciples lead plain life with their attention on the highest. They use control in every sphere of their lives. They procure children but lead a controlled sex-life. They get up long before sunrise, have their seven times morning saran darshana and little after sun set they have five times evening saran darshan. They are *nishkama* devotees and pray for the betterment of mankind at large, *Jagata 'Bhagata Mangala).* They put on simple clothes coloured in geru. They embrace the world

as a family/*brahmandaku kariachhi ghara bakhuri*(Bhima Bhoi)

For the Mahimites the supreme Brahma is the guru and both the sanyasi and layman are His disciples. There is no necessity of a priest to work as a mediator between man and his maker. The sanyasis set examples of self-control and self extinction, sacrefice, indiscrimination, cleanliness in thought and action. They guide the lay disciples along the path of truth, peace, pity and pardon. All sorts of Mahima mendicants and laymen have only one slogan, '*Pranimankara ananda mangala anyare ki labha achhi ?* What else is there other than the welfare and delight of man ? So, the Mahima mendicants, though they look like ancient Indian abdhutas they do not flee society. They are not allowed to enter forest for meditation for self-realisation. This could be done through social co-existence. Their salvation lies in the salvation of humanity at large. They educate society spiritually setting examples rather than preaching sermons. Mahima Dharma does not prescribe any ritual to worship any image.

On the top of all Mahima followers barter their individual souls for universal salvation. Bhima Bhoi sings: *Praninka arata dukha apramita dekhu dekhu keva sahu Mo jivana pachhe narke padithau jagata udharu heu.*

"Who can watch and bear the misery of men ? May my soul be damned to hell for redemption of the universe.

Bhima Bhoi was a poet and articulated his master's commands in his passionate tone. There ends the duty of poet. Because according to James Elroy Flecker," the poet's business is not to save the soul of man but to make

it worth saving". We are sure, the poet has discharged his duties as faithfully as possible. It is the duty of people at large to put the ideas into practice. The broad-world-view of Mahimites that advocates spiritual humanism and absolute socialism, is possible beyond doubt . But without the austerity in thought and action the noble ends can not be reached. Mahima Swami's commands are catered for people in numerous bhajanan, jananas and stuties of Bhima Bhoi, The Mahima sanyasis have put all of them into practice, Millions of Mahimites perform the *sarana darshan* and allied duties. Brahmalina Biswanath Bada has established the tenet of Mahima Dharma as a unique form of Advait, **Visudha advait**. Only when a larger section of our society realise the magnanimity of this Dharm Dhara, a higher order of the society will be established.



MAHIMA CONCEPT OF COMPASSION

"Universal Welfare" (*Jagata Bhagata Mangala*) is the aim and objective of Mahima Dharma. A Mahima follower, for that reason, prays to *Parama Brahma* (Supreme conscience) for alleviation of misery of man and the universe forthwith

Brahma hua parakasha

Pinda Brahmanda durita

Jhatatire nasha.

(Bhima Bhoi ***Bhajan Mala***)

A compassionate human being prays to his lord "the ocean of compassion" for welfare of his fellow beings. A "Mahimite" prays for the welfare of one and all. This broad view of life has been propounded by Mahima Swami. It has been practised by Mahima mendicants and Mahima disciples. In the poetic world of Bhima Bhoi (the first poet of the order) the picture of the concept of compassion has been drawn. I shall highlight on the concept of compassion as a philosophical canon and how is it practised in the Mahima fold.

A Mahimite believes that this world has been created by the invisible and unknowable Lord, Alekha. All the beings are the creations of Alekh Brahma. Hence they all deserve compassion of the Marker. In this world of conflict there is violence everywhere. For selfish gain people hurt one another. It has been practised from days of yore. Bhima Bhoi realised it deeply and expressed his concern variously in his writings. For example we may quote the following couplet from **Stuti Chintamani** :

Dandaka madhyare dashapancha munda
chhidai Bharata yuddhe
Areka angaku pade praharile
E angaku mora badhe.

(In a moment, in the battlefield of Bharata tens of heads are cut off/when another person is a bit struck, this body of mine shakes)

Concern for everybody's welfare is the core philosophy of Mahima Dharma. A, Mahimite is forbidden from doing any harm to his fellow being ? Whatever may be the reason, a follower is never allowed to do any violence. Even for the noblest cause of service to the preceptor *Guru Seva,* a Mahimite is not permitted to do any act that harms any other fellow. He is expected to be full of love. Hence, he is non-violent. Mahima Dharma believes in the concept of Ahimsa Parama Dharma (Non violence is the supreme virtue) So there is instruction for total commitment to Ahimsa. Bhima Bhoi states :

Ahimsa Dharmare ashra kala jebe
Ahimsare kara drudha
Guru Seva kahi himsabadi
hele sunyaru padiba mada.

(If you embrace the way of non violence be firm in it/ If you become violent in the name of service to the lord you will he punished as deemed fit)

This concept gives rise to the idea of equality among beings. Each man should treat the other being as his equal. There is no place for discrimination/partiality as only One Self spreads all over the world. So everyone should share joys and pains equally. In no circumstances this rule be transgressed. If any one does not follow this dictum he would be punished by providence. Bhima Bhoi prays:

Atma bhagatire bhedabheda jebe bajrapadu mo mundaku

Kahe Bhima Bhoi Brahmasapa dei jalidia e pindaku, (**Stuti Chintamani**)

(If I discriminate in the observance of self, thunder may strike my head/ Bhima Bhoi prays, burn my body and may. I be providentially accursed) Thus, Mahima Dharma propagates absolute compassion to animals as there are part and parcel of the cosmic order. So all the members of the Mahima order have been commanded to be compassionate to the animals, birds worms and insects of all sorts of all scale and size; They are just units of the infinite Brahma.

So there is no place for cruelty to animals or birds in this fold. Mahimites oppose sacrificing animals for the practice of rituals. Interestingly enough there is no ritual in Mahima Dharma. Even for the sake of food Mahimites do not kill animals or birds. Mahimites are basically vegetarians. In certain regions non-veg food is admissible where there is dearth of vegetarian food.

Mahima Dharma is based on rationalism and hence fanaticism is not encouraged in this fold. "Mahimites are not food-fanatics. Mahimites are not allowed to keep animals of prey like goat and poultry. This encourages killing and it is an indirect way of cruelty to animals. They keep cows but they are not allowed to keep pigs. They are denied to keep pigeons and parrots for entertainment as it hurts the innocent birds. It is a logical observation that when one wishes to see others happy one has to sacrifice some of one's personal comforts. So the Mahimites have been advised to lead a life of austerity. The brightest example of such life is a Mahima mendicant's. The Mahima abdhutas live closer to the nature. They put on bark of kumbhi tree just to cover their

private parts. Sometimes they cover their heads and put another piece across their shoulders. They carry a palm leaf to shield themselves against sun and rain. They spread straw on ground to lay down. They spend nights in tungi ashrams ,school houses or any other public places undefiled by domestic activities. They do not stay at a particular place for more than one night. Explaining the tenets of the order Mahima senior mendicants move from place to place for betterment of human life and human society at large. They work for the welfare of the world at the expense of their personal comforts.

The second order of Mahima mendicants are called "sadhus". They lead the life of no less austerity. They tread the foot prints of their seniors (abdhuttas) in all walks of life. However, they put on loin clothes dyed in Geru (saffron). They observe celibacy, practise Mahima methods of saran darshan and serve their guru with due devotion. Gradually they attain sainthood and become abadhuta. They also have the singular ambition of mitigating human suffering. They propagate the concept of compassion in their words and deeds.

The Mahima lay-disciples follow the doctrine of piety laid down by Mahima Swami and practised by the saints and Sadhus.They subsist on vegetarian food. But they believe in sanctity of the food. Their food is sattvika in nature. They do not eat left over or stale food. *Niramisha niaintha piuthile lage mitha* (fresh vegetarian dish tastes sweet). They believe in plain living and high thinking. They are taught to be frugal so that they can assist their fellow beings. They form a society based on universal brotherhood. They have mutual love and respect. They work together for the betterment of mankind in general.

Mahimites do not celebrate at the cost of animal or bird's lives. They keep themselves away from carnivals of all sorts. They observe their marriage parties and birthday parties feeding the children and poor, as well as feeding the hungry ones.

These external practices make Mahima followers practise compassion in their thought and prayer. They are not permitted to pray for personal/selfish gains as this order is called niskama dharma. They know that personal welfare is not the real goal of life. Hence both the Sanyasis and samsaris pray the lord for welfare of all.

Bhima Bhoi asks "*pranimanakara ananda mangala anyarc ki labha achhi ?*" (What else is there other than the welfare of the beings) !

The Mahimites have a broad view of life of the world. They try relentlessly to give up personal gains and welfare for the sufferings of the humanity. So Bhima Bhoi expresses the core concept of Mahima Dharma in his oft- quoted couplet :

Praninka arata dukha apramita

Dekhu dekhu keba sahu

Mo jibana pachhe narke padithau

Jagata uddhara heu.

(How can one watch and bear the listless misery of beings ? May my soul be damned for the salvation of universal beings)

(Stuti Chintamani)

Isn't it the most magnanimous message of mercy (compassion) propagated by Mahima Swami in the name of Mahima Dharma ?



MAHIMA CONCEPT OF DELIVERANCE

Mahima Dharma is a spiritual movement in Indian religious order. In the early nineteenth century when India was passing through cultural crises, Mahima Swami manifested himself and gave rise to the order of Brahma realisation. This Brahma as per Mahima philosophy is Alekha, Abarna, Purnanandamaya. He pervades objects of all sorts who can not be confined to idols made of wood, clay or any other metal. Confinement of the Creator to small objects deludes man. So Mahima Swami taught people to realise the truth and inspired them to adore the Absolute. Through the knowledge of the absolute one can be liberated from the endless suffering of existence and the cycle of birth and death.

This universe is the manifestation of the glory of the Creator. This universe is vast and various, but the creator is one. The universe is visible and can be perceived through senses but its creator is invisible and can not be perceived through senses. He can be realised through dispassionate meditation. One who gives up the shackles of many in search of one, attains salvation, It is a process of quest from dual to non-dual.

Mahima Swami pronounced uncompromising non-dualism (visuddha advait bada). He took people of all sorts to His Fold and explained to them the intricate knowledge of the supreme (Brahma vidya), that leads one to the world of eternal bliss, in simplest terms. But He left nothing in writing. However, he granted

enlightenment to a blind tribal youth called Bhima Bhoi of Rairakhole. He began to spell out the philosophy of Mahima Dharma in his innumerable prayers and hymns that attained vedantic height. As his peoms are devotional songs surcharged with emotion, they lack the logical system of philosophy. Hence ,the Adi Chaushathi-Siddhas (the 1st order of siddhababa of Mahima Dharma) searched and got a self-enlightened (Atma Buddha) Sanyasi in the person of Viswanath Baba, who lived for a century and worked to evolve a philosophy for Mahima Dharma. He recorded his findings in the treatise, **Mahima Dharma Pratipadak**" and later in his magnum opus, "**Sarva Veda Vedanta Siromani Alekha Param Brahma Darshanan**, translated into English, as Philosophy of Mahima Dharma. The concept of Deliverance has been clearly explained in these books. This thesis will be based on the writings of Santha Bhima Bhoi and Brahmalina Viswanath Baba.

Bhima Bhoi pronounced Mahima philosophy of Mukti in Sruti-Chintamani :-

"Deva devigana Murtika pasana
Kahaku nabhaji chite,
Mukati kasthare, ekanta nisthare
Eka dhyaiachhi tote."

Gods and godesses are stone and clay.
For deliverance, to Thee, my lord,
Singularly I Pray.

A follower of Mahima Swami pray to his Lord with concentration for attainment of deliverance. He has to denounce idol-worship. Such a devotee does not aspire for anything other than deliverance. He does not care

for his personal security as denouncing gods and goddesses in this land of innumerable gods, involves serious risk. So he surrenders himself to his lord along with his happiness and sorrow. The first poet of Mahima Dharma, Bhima Bhoi states :-

Jagata dharana mukati karana
Tuje brahmanda karata,
Pinda prana adi lagila Anadi
dukha sukha sarba Chinta.

(Stuti Chintamani)

"O Thou the protector of the world
The root cause of deliverance.
To thee I surrender my body and soul
with thoghts sorrowful and joyous."

To a Mahima follower, Brahma is, *Alekha, Abarna, Arupa, Abinasi, Anadi, Ananta, Sunya-Swarupa, Prabuddha guru, Parama prabhu* etc. He is, without attributes, colour shape, destruction, beginning and end. He is all pervasive like the great void. He is self enlightened and the supreme Lord. Realisation of this fact leads one towards emancipation from the bondage of cares and anxieties of the world. In his lyrical poems Bhima Bhoi sings the encomium of his Lords :-

Rupa Rekha nahin he sunyadehi, achha ude hoi
Thou hast no shape and size
O Shapeless one, Thou hast manifested.

Chalante sunye sabada, Anumana chite bheda, Akalana Varanidhi nama mahima agadha

It resounds when He walks in the void, Guess Him in your mind. He is the fathomless sea, limitless in the glory

of his name. Again Bhima Bhoi asks :-

"*Pada pani nahin tanku dhariba kie,*

Emanta Brahma swarupa, dekha na jae.

Who would catch hold of Him

He is invisible Brahma without feet or hands.?

Bhima continues :-

"*Sunya Mandire vihar, Ruparekha nahin jara*"

He, who has no shape or size, moves in the void. So the enlightened poet prescribed measure to know the unknowable in one of his most famous bhajans :-

"*Adekha dekhile yai, Ajapa japile pai*

Achihnaku chinhiraksha Anarupare.

Taribaku thile Asha nirveda dharmare pasa,

Sada jnana mukti pada guruduare.

Alekha pura bhubana nahin tahin bada sana

Samanare daya drusti sarvajivare".

"Know the unknown one, as shapeless,

See the unseen one and concentrate on

the un-meditated one.

If desirous of deliverance

Embrace the non-vedic cult

True knowledge of salvation

Is at His feet.

There is no discrimination

In the indescribable home

All the creatures are treated with equal

Kindness"

The abode of Alekha Brahma is eternally blissful. That is a state of equanimity without sorrow and pain, light or darkness. Bhima Bhoi discovers this world. :-

"*Yeun thare Brahma acchi ude asta, nahin kichhi*"

There is no rise, no fall.

Where there is the Brahma.

Brahamlina Viswanath Baba adores Brahma :-

"*Brahmanandam parama sukhadam kevalam jna murtim*

Dwandatitam gagana sadrusham

Tatwa masyadi Laksham

Ekam, nityam, vimalamachalam

sarbada sakshibhutam

Bhaba titam Triguna rahitam

Sadgurum tam namami"

"I bow to thee O, true preceptor

O, Brahma, O, Delight, O, Wisdom incarnate,

O, One beyond conflict, vast as the void

"Thou art That"

One, Eternal, Pristine, unmovable, Eternally vigilant, Beyond imagination,

Devoid of attributes Good or bad.

This Idea of "Absolute Brahma" is not new to Indian philosophy. The ancient seers of India meditated on Brahma as stainless, shapeless propeller of the universe. He is the "unmoved mover". He creates without being created. He sees and shows but can not be seen. All the forms are created by him, but He has no form of his own. The Kena Upanishad records his glory as follows :-

Yat bachan bhyuditam yena vega-bhyuditam yadidammupasate.

That which is not uttered by speech, that by which speech is revealed, know that alone to be Brahman, not what people worship as objects.

Yatmanab Tadeva Brahma twam bidhi nedam yadidamupaste.

That which man does not comprehend with mind that by which, they say, the mind is encompassed, know that to be Brahma and not what people worship as an object.

Yatchakshusa na pasyati yen chakhuvi pasyati

Tadeva Brahma twam vidhi nedhi nedam yadidampasate.

That which man does not see with eye, that by which man perceives the activities of the eye, know that alone to be Brahma and not which people worship as an object.

Yat sastrenana shunoti yena srotram idam strutam

Tadevam Brahma twam vidhi nedam yedidamupasate.

That which man does not hear with ear,

that by which men knows the ear, know that to be Brahman and not this that people worship as an object.

Yat pranena na praniyate

Tadeba Brahma twam vidhi nedam yadidamuspasate.

That which men do not smell with the organ of smell, is impelled, know that to be Brahman and not what People worship as an object.

Hence, Bhima Bhoi considers Brahma, is beyond senses not the sense-object which are clay and stone.

He is perfect. The knower of this truth is the real Jnani (knower). He became Brahma ,as "Brahmavid, Brahmeiba bhabet.

The wisdom pertaining to oneness of Brahma dawned on Indian mind with the dawn of civilisation as *Ekam eba adwtiyam* The only one without a second.

The Vedas as a whole expounded the idea of one creator but their loose structure and complexity kept the common folk at bay. The cunning priests added fake practices and obstructed the path of Brahma realisation. So the karma overshadowed the Jnana. Seers like Jajnavalkhya, Kanada tried to cleanse the path of Brahma bhakti the upanishadic knowledge. **Bhagavad Gita** told all these things in conclusion. Srikrishna realised that mirror-like, the path of piety collects dirt and the conscious of this real one is generated from time to time to cleanse. So He proclaimed :-

Yadayadahidharmasya glanir bhavati Bharat,

Abhyuthanayadharmasya tadatman srujamyaham.

(Whenever O' descendant of Bharat vice grows virtue declines I assume incarnation to preserve the virtue) Here 'I' stands for self-consciousness which is equivalent to Brahma consciouness.

It has been observed fromconsciousness time to time that the pristine knowledge can not retain its purity due to deliberate attempt. They are the religions of the selected few who label themselves as chosen seed intermediaries who lead people astray covering the face of truth with a golden dish. Due to these deliberate attempts and all devouring capacity of time, misconceptions creep into the field of religious practices. Idol worship, and animal sacrifice replace realisation of the Real and

self-sacrifice. But the truly devout ones direct people towards the worship of the right things through symbols. Tulasidas is one such seer who brought the treasure of the Ramayana to common people translating it into colloquial tongue and telling people about shapeless Brahma in the symbols of Rama. To him Ramachandra is *Raghunayak, sayaka bamakare.* "The great descendant of Raghu with bow in his left" as well as :-

Tumah smarupa Brahma abinasi

Sada ekarasa sahaja udasi,

"Akala, aguna, aja anagha anemaya

Ajina amogh bhakti karunamaya.

You are alike to all, imperishable Brahma, ever, impartial by nature, integral devoid of material properties, unborn sinless, immutable, invincible unfailing in power and full of compassion". Again :-

Tanu binuparasa nayan binudekhe

grahai ghran binu basa ashesa.

"He has no form but can be touched

He has no eyes but can be seen

without nose can he smell endless types of perfume,

How many of the readers of **Manasa** realise the ultimate truth propounded by Tulasidas ? Though images are made to help the common man to realise the formless one, *(Nirakara)* in fact, they obstruct their way to the summit which Bhima Bhoi calls *Sunya Sikhar* (the summit of the void) Plato rightly observes :-

"It is power of appearance that leads us astray".

Objects in themselves are mutable. So naturally

they fail to reflect the immutable and the idea of super sense in them.

History of religions have proved that idol worship had done more harm than help to mankind. Many wars have been waged due to this false association with the objects. Few shaktsas, apart from, Rama Krishna Paramahansa worship Kali as *parambrahma swarupini.*

Though idols were prepared for the common people they helped a few and misled many.

These worshippers were slaves to certain cults instead of becoming enlightened and emancipated souls.

So Buddha raised his voice against this practice in eternal land of India. The idolatry bred desire in men for more objects and desire bred strife. Hence, the Buddha rejected "desire" and asked mankind in general to renounce objects of desire and desire itself. He inspired people to attain Nirvan, or Mukti or deliverance.

"Swami Vivekananda observes, " The Buddha liked to make every one in India a monk or nun, We can not except that from every body. This led to gradual relaxation among monks and nuns". (*Selected works*)

So Buddhism was wiped off the land of its birth despite its concepts of enlightment, as it lacked social commitment.

Mahima Swami did not make any compromise in determination of the Truth or *Brahma Nirupana*. Nor did he grant an laxity to the mendicants. A willing person can only be taken into its fold with parental permission. Thereafter he is tought the rigorous ways of realisation. The lay disciples are allowed to discharges the duties

assigned to them with firm faith in the lord. Thus Mahima order has two types of followers, viz. the lay disciples and the mendicants who move from place to place just to educate the people the all pervasiveness of Brahma. In the words of Bhima Bhoi:-

Sthabaru jangama kitarupatanga Chahindele anusari, Sakala ghatare puri samanare nuhen sanabada kari. **(Stuti chintamani)**

No discrimination is possible

As He pervades equally

All including the immovable objects,

Insect and worms.

As a follower observes his master in every subject and every being, he can not be unjust to any of them. On the other hand he adores every one with love that breeds social harmony. Thus Mahima Dharma prescribes non-discrimination as a way for attaintment of universal peace. Bhima Bhoi warns the Mahima followers against discrimination of all sorts :-

Atma bhagatire bhedabheda yebe bajra padu mo mundaku, Kahe Bhima Bhoi Brahma sapa dei jali dia e pindaku,

"If I discriminate in realisation of self

May thunder strike my head,

May Thou burn my body

With celestial curse"

This idea of non-discrimination *(abheda-bhaba)* is absolute in Mahima practice. No man claims an upperhand in this order. Among the monks there is an incredible sense of equality. The senior Babas prostrate

at the feet of the junior ones at the time of initiation of the latter. The mutual respect is shown everywhere throughout life. The lay disciples form a single class of men and women. This **way** admits no class distinction and initiates any one whoever comes eagerly to practise it. There is a simple but significant saying in Mahima Dharma,

Jati Khojile mukti nahin,

Mukti khojile jati nahin.

"There is no deliverance for a caste conscious man and no caste for a seeker of deliverance."

Mankind, according to Mahima philosophy can only be divided into two categories as male and female, Mahima Swami fought against the caste-system long before Mahatma Gandhi tried to make people conscious of universal brotherhood. So the followers of Mahima Dharma pray and work for benefit of the Beings. Bhima makes an emphatic pronouncement:-

Pranimanankara Ananda Mangala

Anyare ki karya achhi ?

"Peoples' "Welfare and delight is the goal

What use is there in any other work ?

So Mahima monks are not allowed to retire to the forest to observe penance for attainment of deliverance. They renounce their personal world just to be members of a wider world. They have to enlighten people with their knowledge. So they move from place to place wishing the best of the world shouting "Jagata Bhagata Mangala Karantu guru Mahima Alekha. "(may the Lord Alekh do good to the world and devotees at large.) Raghunath Baba prescribes :-

Chintayitwa parmatman ratrimekaniketane

Upakaraya lokanam stirikrutya mano brajet.

A mendicant should spend one night in one village whishing best of the people with firm faith in the Supreme Being.

Not only do they wish the best of the people but also they work for it. Even they are ready to surrender their wellbeing for the world. Bhima Bhoi submits :

(Praninka arata dukha apramita

Dekhu, dekhu keba sahu

Mo jivana pachhe narke padi thau

Jagate uddhara heu.)

"How can one watch and endure

The miseries of the beings.

May my soul be condemned

For redemption of the world." (Stuti...)

This sense of sacrifice bred of universal Love, through the vision of the universal soul is the central philosophy of Mahima Dharma. The knower of this attains salvation in life. Swami Vivekananda confirms this in the following words :-

"The true jnani is he, who has the deepest love within his heart and at the same time is the practical seer of *Advait* in his outward relations. And the true **Bhakta** is he who realising his soul as identified with the universal sould and thus possessed of the true jnana within, feels for and loves every one." **(Chicago Lecture)**

When the creator and His creation become insepararable for a seeker, he falls in its love without

being of it. He realises the truth, contained in the Upanishadic pronouncement:

"Ishavasyam idam sarvam
Yatkincha jagatyam jagat
Tena tyaktena bhunjitha.
Ma gridha kasyaswid dhanam."

(Ishopanisad-I)

Whatsoever is there in this mutable world is pervaded by the Lord (*Isha*). Enjoy them without attachment (with a sense of sacrifice). Do not cove whose else is the wealth?"

This is called 'Niskama' or desirelessness in Mahima philosophy. A follower has to work without any desire for the fruits. This brings no sorrow for the workers. So Bhima invites people to practise it.

"Kara niskama bhakti suchitego
Deha dhari achha jete jagate go" **(Bhajanamala)**

"O the beings of the world,
Practise the cult of desirelessness."

Desire causes misery of all sorts. So the Mahima followers level down their desires and work for the betterment of the world at large. This desire is the most powerful bond that ties an individual to the sense objects. So the followers of Mahima Dharma must snap this bond to attain deliverance. This deliverance is a mental state. The Upanishad lays a great stress on mind :-

The mind is truth, is for mankind
The means of bondage and release,
For bondage if objects bound,

from objects free that called the release.

Maitri-Vi-34

It is the mind that matters. The mental world is a finer world than the physical. Even a captive can enjoy mental freedom. So the devotees have to liberate the mind as deliverance or '*Mukti,*' in Swami Vivekananda's words "means entire freedom from the bondage of the good and bad. A gold chain is as much a chain as an iron one."

Working on and on a practitioner gives up desires of sense and desires of mind and attains equanimity of mind.

So Bhima Bhoi surrenders both *dukha* (sorrow) and *Sukha* (pleasure) to the Absolute Brahma. This state of absolute self surrender grants the devotee bliss eternal, or moksha, He sings in "full throated glee.":-

"*Samarpideli paili sarva*"

(Surrendering everything I got all)

Only the heighest is attained through absolute self-surrender.

The philosophy of Mahima Dharma lays greater stress on life here, than on life hereafter. The followers of Mahima Swami seek two-fold deliverance here in life and in life efter death. The first is known as *jivan mukti* and the second is known as Videha mukti. The first one leads to the second one. The immediate and the ultimate compliment each other.

The Mahima order comprises two segments; sanyase and Grahyastha. The Mahima Senyasies live life of renunciation seeking both types of deliverance. The

gruhastas (lay disciples) seek jivanmukti and gradually attain Videha mukti through constant practice. When a lay-disciple renounces the world, he becomes a *Vairagi*. Gradually he climbs the ladder and becomes a *Sadhu* and finally an *Abadhuta Sanyasi*. After performing life's journey he attains perfection technically known as *Brahmalina* state.

Both the sanyasies and lay-disciples follow certain canons to attain this state of eternal bliss. The basic ingredients of Mahima philosophy are (1) *Ahimsa* (non-violence). (2) *Satya* (truth) (3) Brahmacharya (celibacy). (4) *Abheda* (non-discrimination) and (5) Tyaga (sacrifice) These age-old values are observed by the Sanyasies in letter and spirit. In Mahima Philosophy, these ancient values attain new glory. Bhima Bhoi pronounces :-

"*Ahimsa dharmare ashrakala jebe*

ahimsare kara drudha,

Guru sevalkahi himsabadi hele

sunyaru padiba mada."

(Be firm is non-violence

If you embrace the non-violent way

Penalty will issue from the void

if violence is practised in the name of service to the Lord.)

A follower of Mahima Swami must be non-violent in his thought, expression and action. The Sanyasi can not transgress any of the rules. However a lay-disciple is allowed to perform somehow cruel duties without hatred and malafide intention for social order and human welfare. For example :-

"Rajamane rajaniti karuthantu dandasimhasane basi,

Doshaku chahin bujha mane karantu hrudare Mahima ghoshi."

(May the kings play politics

with sceptre and crown

Let them judge as per rule

chanting the name of Mahima at heart.)

Fishermen may catch fish and the *Kshatriyas* may kill the enemies of the nation but kindness to animals is always desirable. So Bhima Bhoi sings:-

Dharmabanta prani dharmakarupachhe

sakala jibaku chahin

Mahima dharmaku ashre karithau

atma pare daya bahi.

"Let the virtuous observe the rules of piety, taking animals of all types into account. May he seek anchorage in Mahima with kindness to souls." Mahatma Gandhi is similar in his observation of non-violence:- "Ahimsa is not the crude thing, it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing, is no doubt, part of Ahimsa. But it is the least expression. The principle of Ahimsa is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to any one." (Selected works of Mahatma Gandhi)"

Mahima bhajile mithya na chalai

Satya di kahile para,

jnana dharma na janile kis hela

abasya heba uddhar.

Falsehood is not allowed in Mahima Dharma. Just tell the truth if you can. Even if you are ignorant of penance you will surely be delivered. Neither the monks nor the lay disciples are allowed to be false at any sphere of life as Brahma is truth. Brahmacharya, or celibacy is the next principal principle that Mahima Sanyasies have to practise in fullness of the term. They have to treat women as mother figures. In day to day life they address women of the world "mother". The lay-disciples can have sex with wives for procuration but not for enjoyment. It has to be controlled and the minds of the followers of Mahima should always be free from sexual hankering. Bhima Bhoi records Mahima Swami's injunction:-

"Mahima bhajile stiri sangamaku
na kalpiba kadachite
Apana bharija hele kis hela
Vichariba antargate." **(Stuti Chintamani)**

One who follows Mahimadharma
Must never hanker after sex
Even if she is one's wife
one must be controlled in one's behaviour.

Hence, extramarital sex and any such irregularity are always condemned. Gandhiji explains this concept of *Brahmacharya* which is akin to Mahima concept.

"Let us remember the root meaning of *Brahmacharya. "Charya"* means course of conduct, *Brahmacharya* is conduct adopted to search *Brahma,* i.e., Truth From this etymological meaning arises the special meaning viz. control of all senses. We must entirely forget the incomplete definition, which restricts itself to the sexual aspects of it." **(Selected works of Mahatma**

Gandhi).

So for deliverance from suffering *dama* or control is essential. This culmination in control of breath called Yamaniyam and leads a practiser to the land of bliss without life circle. Mahima philosophy propagates non-discrimination of all sorts. Not only one must treat every one equally (as stated earlier). One has to treat pleasure and pain, rise and fall with equanimity. Such a mind is free from vice and virtue. In **Stutichintmani** it has been stated

"Mahima Bhajile dukhasukha
Sakala maniba eka
Papa punya katha jana nahin taku
aborichhanti Alekh (11/93)

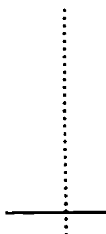
A follower of Mahima
Accepts sorrow and pleasure equally
He does not know virtue or vice
As Alekh parvades everything.

With all these four, an individual realises the truth and gets ready to sacrifice everything. Of course, to inculcate all these virtues one has to sacrifice the apparently sweet things of senses. With this mentality a person wades, through the cares and anxieties of the world. He is delivered from lust, anger, greed, ignorance, pride and jealousy, the deadly sins. Once these bondages are discarded an individual enjoys eternal life. The Mahimites are devoted to their Lord who manifests in the sacred selfless duties prescribed by Mahima Swami. He liberates the devotees from the philosophical jargons and complexities of *Bhakti tatwas* as propagated by the Vaishnavites.

Not only in principle but in practice also a follower of Mahima maintains purity. He lives a very plain but regulated life, He is taught the Spartan simplicity in food habit. With a mind fixed at the highest he lives on plain vegetarian food, puts on coarse saffron-cloth and lives on his own earning. He gets up early in the morning and observes sarana darshana that involves a lot of physical exercise, to keep fit.

Physical fitness, mental control, and spiritual exertion enable a follower of Mahima Swami to realise Brahman as the Absolute and shapeless Reality who pervades everything of this world. With this strength he wades through delusion and attains perfection and deliverance from pleasure and pain; birth and death and bonds of all sorts.





VISUDDHA ADVAITA

In Advaita Vedanta, Brahma Sadhana, (realisation of the Supreme) comes up to the final phase. The exponents of this school of thought discover a unique unity amidst diversity; a blissful concord in the ghastly discord of the Universe. Through concentrated onward march, they have gone up to the summit of realisation of the Real discarding all sorts of entanglements of ignorance (*Avidya Bandhana*) The discordant elements of the world and the distracting elements of existence disturb a seeker in ways more than one but the firm one sheds them off and moves on to realise the Supreme Reality—the One without a second (*ekam eva adwitiyam*). This *Brahma* is *Purna* (Absolute) *Nirguna* (Without attribuie); *Niranjana* (Stainless) *Aksaya* (indeclinable) as *Alekha* (indescribable) in *the Advaita* (non-dual) philosopy.

In this spiritual land of India, Adivaita, has a very long history spanning millennia back in time. This monistic concept precedes all other religions of the world that claim rationality in worship of one deity. But strangely Advaita the road leading to the realisation of the One, is not single. Hence, there are different sections in the Advaita philosophers. The seekers of the Indivisible (*Abheda*) are divided into several schools. Sankara figures atop in this philosophical systems. He churns the seas of Vedas to extract the butter of Advaita Vedanta. Being the first and the foremost authority on the system, he discovers an ethereal existence between the man and his Maker. This, he labels *Maya* or *Avidya* (Illusion and Ignorance

respectively). For him, *Brahma* is Real as the world of appearance is unreal. This transitory world is the projection of *Maya*. But, "Sankara", according to Romain Rolland, "himself did not attempt to define *Maya*. He only said that illusion existed and that the aim of *Advaita* philosophy was to annihilate it." *(The life of Ramakrisna, Reprint 1994 P. 62-63)*. In the light of-this statement in order to realise *Brahma* a seeker has to renounce the world, mindful of Sankara's finding, *(Brahma Satya; Jagat Mithya)* the Maker is Real, the apparent universe is unreal.

Ramanuja pronounced a new system that he called *Visistadvaita* or qualified monism. He recognised *Brahma* as the Reality and unlike Sankara he recognised the apparent world as the spark of the Real. He realised the existence of *Brahma* in objects and beings. For him all the objects are radiant with the attributes of *Brahma*. The followers of Sankara made use of the same way for the evolution of individual souls.

While Sankara considered the world as a hurdle in the path of the spiritual quest Ramanuja deemed it as a means to an end. Whether they rejected or accepted the world of objects they meddled in it for an upward march. Later ,came a good number of thinkers who stuck to the one—*Brahma* principle but named it differently and applied different methods of speculation. *Buddhadvaita, Dvaitadvaita, aivdva*, are a few names in the prolonged history of non-dual philosophy in India. The followers of all these schools asserted oneness for their deities and accepted the mundane world as the attributes of the one. They named the one saiva, sakta etc., according to their cult. They however, tried to equate their deity with the Absolute but imagined form for the formless and gradually succumbed to the powers of Maya

and accepted multiplicity of deities.

In the mid-nineteenth century, a few years prior to the establishment of Brahm Samaja and Aarya Samaja, for reassertion of Brahma Realisation a new system came into practice in Orissa in the name of *Mahima Dharma.* Mahima Swami the founder of this Movement in Orissa claims tens of thousands of disciples, all over India who believe in the oneness of *Brahma.* They accept Him as one without a second. He is synonym of consciousness and a man free from all sorts of prejudice can only realise Him. This creator is uncreated, unborn, indeclinable, but is the sole cause of creation. This world of appearance is the manifestation of His glory *(Mahima)* He is neither shrouded by *Maya* nor uses any medium like *Maya* for this manifestation. Hence, oneness is unmixed, *Visuddha. (unalloyed)*

Brahmalina Viswanatha Baba who presided over *Mahima Dharma Samaja* for almost a century and codified the philosophy of *Mahima Dharma* labelled oneness of *Brahma* as *Visuddha Advaita..* He rejects the existence of Illusion, *Maya* like Totapuri, the preceptor of Ramakrisna. The *Baba* deems *Maya* as "something non-existent, a void, a lie which only required to be denounced to vanish forever" *(Life of Ramakrisna*—Remain Rolland), All that come between the man and his Maker is void and the images that one sees are false misconceptions and mental hallucinations.

A follower *of Mahima* in the medium of Advaita-Philosophy has to establish a direct communion with the *Brahma.* Once the contact is established, one realises the glory of the created universe with all its animate and inanimate objects. He loves the universe as the spark of the universal soul. He enjoys without attachment, nay with

complete dedication. He believes in the *Nisanga Karmayoga* as propagated in *Bhagavad Gita.* The redemption of the individual soul depends on the redemption of the collective soul. He watches his master manifest all over His creation like sunshine. This enabled him to embrace the lowliest of the low over his peer and naturally enjoys the bounties of nature or suffers its vagaries.

In order to keep the order *Visuddha* (Pristine) the followers admit no insignia, chant no formal *Mantra;* worship no deity but keep themselves aware of the supreme Being the consciousness. They have no specific place of worship, no temple. For them the entire earth is the shrine, the sanctum of their lord. When the day dawns they wash themselves ;cleanse a patch of land and, say their prayers looking up to the space. The pray for the welfare of the people at large. They are forbidden from praying for themselves. They do not pray for salvation even at other's cost in the evening at sunset they repeat the same *sarana darsana* (realisation through invision for five times)

The followers *of Mahima* are men and women of the world with their families, or wandering mendicants. The householder—disciples outnumber the mendicants. The disciples have built almost several thousands cottages for the *Niskama sadhakas* (non-attached spiritual aspirants) over the state of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Assam.Scholars from abroad are attracted towards this faith that pays maximum respect to human values and goes far beyond the followers of non-dualism of all forms with the new concept of *Visuddha Advaita Vedanta.*



BISWANATHA BABA

Biswanatha Baba is not just another person of Cuttack who enriched its millennium long cultural heritage; he was a unique person whom almost all the great persons of the cultural capital of Orissa adored and admired for his enlightened instructions. He was born somewhere in Cuttack district to a pious couple of Mahima Dharma. (The Mahima **abdhutas** do not disclose their biographical details, following their primal preceptor, Mahima Swami). **Biswanatha** renounced the world at the tender age of seven and wandered about in the pious company of **chausathi siddhas** (the first group of Mahima mendicants). He traversed among the villages of Orissa and collected information about Mahima Swami from senior devotees who had the opportunity of meeting the Swami. He enjoyed the enlightened company of the Siddha Babas and read through the **Vedanta.** The Babas could realise that Biswanatha would be able to compile the philosophical tenets of Mahima Dharma. With the inspiring blessings of his teachers; enormous experiences gathered from daily travels and above all, his incredible intellect, Biswanatha became the first philosopher of Mahima Dharma before he became a man of forty. Passing through the rigorous phases of Mahima order, "**Bairagi** and "**Sadhu".** Biswanath became an abdhut and thereafter came to be known as Brahmabadhuta Biswanatha Baba. This

bark - clad mobile mendicant concentrated on his work of material collection and compilation of Mahima Dharma Darshana. Out of his painstaking endeavour came out immortal works of literature and philosophy.

Biswanath Baba's treatise on Mahima Dharma came out as **Mahima Dharma Pratipadaka** in 1931. It is still considered as the most authentic work on Mahima Philosophy. The Baba explains how Mahima Dharma is the most relevant way of life for the strife - torn society. The next book he wrote was **Mahima Dharma Itihash** (History of Mahima Dharma). The Baba traces back the origin & growth of the Dharma in Orissa. It is an indispensable historical study on Mahima Society. The extraordinary scholar authored **Sri Chinmaya Brahma Geeta, Bhagabatsara Satya Dharma, Siddhasadhu Charitamruta, Gruhasth Subhakarma Vidhana, Mahima Gadi, Mahima Dharma Dharma Itihasa, Sadhu Giti, Tatamata Giti** to utter his final word on the Mahima Society management. .His magnum -opus, **Sarbaveda Vedanta Saratatwa Siromani, Aiekha paramabrahma Darshanam** proves Biswanatha Baba as a philosopher on his own - right and he establishes Mahima Dharma as **Visudha Advaita** (pristine non-dualism) in this book. This is adjudged as the latest comparative study on Indian philosophy after Jagadguru Sankaracharya.

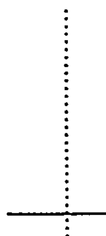
Biswanatha Baba was a saint self realised (*Atmajnani Sadhu*) and for his austerity and perfection, he was elected the president of Mahima Dharma Parichalana Samiti. He remained the presiding monk of Mahima order more than half a century till his end.

Mahima Dharma was established as the only original religious order of Orissa. The Baba moved about in the villages and cities; he taught the individuals and addressed public meetings. Most of his speeches have been published in book-form, as **Mahima 'Dharma Tatvasara, Mahima Dharma Swarupa, Mahima Dharma Pradipa, Mahima Dharma Darshana Tatwa, Divyajnanaloka, Mahima Dharma O' Bauddha Dharma, Mahima Gosain O' Mahima Dharma, Sucheta Vani etc**. His literary excellence has been recognised and honoured by Orissa Sahitya Akademi, Utkal University, Prachi - Samiti, Kalinga - Bhatati etc with awards.

In order to perpetuate his philosophical research the Baba set up **Mahima Dharmalochana Samiti** at Chandini Chowk Mahima Ashrama in Cuttack with great scholars like Dr. Pranakrishna Parija, Prof. Artaballav Mahanti, 'Gopal Chandra Praharaj, Bichhanda Charan Pattanaik Prof. Satrughna Nath etc as office bearers. The Samiti was elevated to the status of **Mahima Dharmalochana Parishad in 1992**. The Baba who could foresee his time to leave the mortal world convened a three-day assembly of religious persons prior to Buddha (Baisakh) Pumima of 1992. Thousands of Mahima followers participated in the Mahima leela. The Baba took leave of his disciples on Buddha Prunima day early in the morning. His mortal remains were consigned to the earth there at Chandini Chowk Mahima Tungi. A beautiful monument has been built on the sopt. Thousands of devotees, pay their tribute to the spot sanctified with the Baba's remains.

Though the Baba spent his entire life as a mobile mendicant he had made Cuttack his centre of work. He spent a good part of his life in the city. To-day his tungi (rests hed) has been developed into a big institution with a library and a research centre. The Headquarters of Mahima Dharmalochana Parisad and Viswanath Baba Smruti Parishad are situated on the Ashram campus. This Ashrama has become a spot of tourist interest inside the millennium city as it keeps alive the memory of a saint who lived more than a century working for welfare of all.





MAHIMA DHARMA AND KSHETRABASI BABA

Mahima Dharma is a spiritual mass-movement of Orissa, the meeting ground of almost all the religions of the world. In the history of religions of the world Mahima Dharma is the latest way of life embraced by millions of people. As it touches the predicaments of the people both physical and Spiritual, people embrace it ungrudgingly. Despite its rigid way of observance people follow it as it is based on love, truth, justice and non-violence. The very word "Mahima" is analogous to glory. Mahima Dharma upholds the glory of all religious orders hitherto practised at home and abroad. This dharma is mistaken as Buddhism and Jainism for its emphasis on Satya (Truth) or Ahimsa (non-violence); Hinduism for its emphasis on realisation of Self (Atmopalabdhi) for example. But Mahima dharma is a unique order. This order embraces all the traditional values with superimposition of all its socio-economic methods. These ideas make it a modern way of life. This way has an edge over other ways as it has reduced rituals to the bare minimum. It suits to the people at the grass-root. Mendicants move about preaching the timeless values from door to door. Hence, Mahima Dharma may be termed as the revival of the Sanatan Dharm or the way Eternal with a universal appeal.

Mahima Swami, the propagator of the order manifested at Puri in 1826 and asserted that the Maker

of the universe is one and invisible. He can not be described as He has no beginning (*Anadi*) and no end (*Ananta*) has no hand or feet (*apanipada*) and this above all indeclinable (*Akshara*). Hence, He is indescribable and non-god (*Alekh*). This glorious entity identified himself with that Brahma as his followers saw Brahma in Him. That's why his order is known as both Mahima Dharma or Alekh Dharma. His followers adore Him as Mahima Alekh, the primal preceptor.

Mahirna Swami moved from Puri to Joranda Via Konark, Bhubaneswar (Khandagiri, Dhauligiri), Cuttack, and Kapilas. He marked, the religious practice of the people of Orissa in different temples of Vishnu, Surya, Siva, Sakti, Jaina and Buddha intently and discovered to his utter dismay priestly exploitation of the people with royal patronage. In the forest areas among the tribal people. conversion was rampant. Preachers took mass ignorance and poverty into their favour. Mahirna Swami meditated over all these socio-cultural disorders and meditated over them for twenty four years termed as *atmayoga Samadhi* (perfection in self Realisation). Mahima Swami left the meditative way and began his revolutionary way with a singular motif of "Deliverance of the people at large", (*Jagata bhagata uddhar*). By 1850 Mahima Swami was among the people at Joranda in the princely state of Dhenkanal. There he kindled the **Brahma Dhuni**, (eternal fire) symbolic of spread of wisdom. The flame that the Swami kindled is still there in the *Dhuni Mandir* of Joranda Gadi).

Mahima Swami revived the age old Hindu way of life based on Satya (Truth) Ahimsa (Non-violence), Brahma Charya (celibacy), Astheya, Aparigraha (non-

possession), Santi (peace), Daya (Compassion), Kshyama (Pardon) for attainment of Moksha . Salvation is the key word for Mahima Dharma. A follower of Mahima observes this way both for physical and celestial salvation. Mahima Dharma stresses on the physical fitness of the devotees. So he is instructed to get up early in the dawn to take a holy bath. Thereafter he prostrates seven times facing east. He eats only after sunrise. He puts on saffron coloured dress and does his assigned duty with devotioan.

Mahima Swami embraced devotees from all castes and allowed them to earn their bread in their own tradition. They can marry to procure children but they are not allowed to indulge. The Mahima mendicants are prohibited from marriage. They are expected to be perfect celibates.

Thousands of mendicants, (bairagis, Sadhus and abdhutas) move about from door to door preaching this essential virtue. They put up at a village for a night and accept food only once from a house holder. They pose as examples for the lay devotees. Both the mendicants and followers do not dine in the night. They prostrate for five times in the evening just after sun-down. The instruction is imparted in vernacular though the babas prove outstanding Sanskrit scholars. They cultivate Jnana (Knowledge) Karma (activities) and Bhakti (devotion). Thus, the Mahima followers work for a better social and spiritual order. It has become a mass movement against idol-worship and priestly exploitation. As it is based on love for man as practised non-violently Mahima Dharma has gained ground in the holy state of Orissa. People of neighbouring lands are coming forward to embrace it.

Thousands of Alekh Tungis and ashramas have been set up all over the state. Mahima Melas are being organised almost every day. Thousands of books have been published on Mahima Dharma in Oriya, Hindi, English, Bengali, Telugu and Tamil.

All these have become possible due to selfless, rather self sacrificing single-minded activities of the Mahima Abadhutas and Sadhu-bairagis who work as the representatives of Mahima Swami who left this mundane world in 1876. Brahmabadhuta Keshtrabasi Baba is one of the frontline abadhutas of Mahima order. His contribution to the Mahima order is commendable.

As per Mahima order the abadhutas do not disclose their bio-graphical details. It is learnt from external sources that Kshetrabasi Baba was born in the coastal belt of Eastern Orissa in about 1895 to a pious vaishnab couple. Keeping pace with the prevalent order he learnt Oriya bhajanas, champus etc and participated in pala as a young boy. He visited local temples and hermitages seeking salvation, like his Guru Mahima Swami he was disillusioned soon and one fine morning he left home following Brahmabadhuta Anadi Baba as a bairagi. Then he went on riding the steps to the status of Brahmabadhuta and moved about the state in company of illustrious babas. He learnt the tenets of Brahma Dharma reading scriptures, listening to the siddha Babas and interacting with wise scholars. Despite all these activities he adhered to the austre ways of the life as a Brahmabadhuta.

Kshetrabasi Baba preached the core canons of Mahima Dharma in his speeches and writings. He met the individuals and helped them to solve their personal

problems. He held Dharma sabhas and addressed crowds. People thronged around him for his blessing and speechless instructions (as the Baba utter few words due to old age).

In his century-long life of penance Keshetrabasi Baba has initiated thousands of men and women into Mahima Dharma. He has established hundreds of Tungi Ashrams in Orissa. He has traversed the state in addressing people. The Baba has attracted crowds beyond the boundaries of Orissa, in Bengal, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh in particular. The *baba's* contribution to Mahima Gadi at Joranda is no less commendable. He remained in charge of the building of the new Dhuni Mandir on the Mahima Gadi campus.

Brahmabadhuta Kshetrabasi Baba is known for austere way of life. Taking his penance into account the Mahima Dharma Samaja of Gurugadi elected him to the highest places of it. He became the president of Mahima Samaja for quite a long time. He still remained the member of the adhyakshs sabha and the arch-adviser of the order. As it has been already said that the Baba was an expert singer. He devoted his night hours in writing musical poetry including bhajanas and jananas, puranas and philosophical treatise. Utkal Mangal Mahima Prabha, a two volume poetic work on Mahima Dharma is an extra ordinary work by the Baba. Prabudha-Purana is the Baba's magnum opus. It tells the history, philosophy and spread of Mahima Dharma at home and abroad. He wrote Mahima Dharma Upadesha in simple Oriya prose to drive home the lay disciples to the critical world of Mahima philosophy. Besides these volumes, Bataghata Parichaya, Bhajanmala, Subhakarma Bidhana

are his other famous books. A galaxy of mendicants has been given balkala bana by the Baba. They uphold the Mahima order. Though the Baba has travelled in and out of the state as a preacher, the Kalonagiri, Ratnagiri area has remained central to his activities. The Baba has expressed his will to be part and parcel of this soil. So the Sidhapitha Kolanagiri has been organised here. This institution has an ambitious plan to set up an International Research Centre of Mahima Philosophy and literature to keep the Baba's memory alive in all times to come. There is a plan of putting up a library, a museum and an auditorium around the proposed samadhi pitha (the baba's body will be consigned to earth as per his will). It has already been done.

The devotees of Mahima Dharma have come forward to set up this institution to pay their homage to the centenarian baba. Abadhuta Nityananda Das Baba, his closest associate takes the lead in organising this institution. This organisation will work for further development of Mahima Dharma that works for a better world order with its message of love and peace.



Kunja Bihari Baba : A Saint who loved the world

Brahma Abadhuta Kunja Bihari Baba was a rare personage in the **Mahima Abadhuta** order who worked relentlessly in twentieth century Odisha for spiritual and social uplift of people in general and the Odias in particular. The Baba shouldered various responsibilities in his life time and attained incredible success both as a sanyasi and a social reformer. He had renounced the world as a child when he followed Abadhuta Ratnamani Baba as a disciple. He served his Guru selflessly and concentrated on the spiritual scripture. He excelled in both the fields and got blessings of the *siddha baba*. He realised that the essence of Dharma lays in the welfare of (the creatues) the world. He made up his mind to serve man to gain the bliss of the creator. He read and realised the greatness of Mahima literature in general and Bhima Bhoi's pc ry in particular. He could explain this shastric injunction very plainly and followed them in his life in letter and spirit.

As a mobile Mahima mendicant Kunja Baba travelled through India following the religious tenets of Mahima Dharma. He preached Mahima Dharma in Dhenkanal, Angul, Sambalpur, Debagada, Keonjhar, Boudh Phullabani, Sonepur, Bolangir, Bargarh, Jharasuguda, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Nabarangpur, Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri and Ganjam.

The Baba had gone beyond the borders of the state of Odisha to preach Mahima Dharma. He visited

Rayagada of Chhatishgad, Basta etc. Bhadranchal, Godavari, Sukumao, Vijaya Nagar, Parulia, Barkoda, Medinpur as well as west Bengal. He setup a number of Tungi Ashramas there. He assisted Ratnamani Baba in Management, *Karadagadia Baramandir, Kendhara-Bhima Bhoi Pitha, Chicholi, Bhukta Khaira, Palimal, Bhabani Patana,* Godempara, Kambhari, Bangomunda, Simapali, Ghuchaguda, Dedar, Nabarangpur, Pariabahar Mahima Ashramas are prominent among them.

Kunja Baba was fonc t his disciples. He loved humanity at large. In order to educate the weaker section of society, he set up a good number of schools. He raised fund from the followers for the management of the schools. Satya Mahima Sanskruta Vidyapitha, Khaira Chicholi, Primary School, Mahima Blind Dumb and Deaf school were the institutions set up and managed by him.

Thirty bairagis followed Baba Kunja Bihari in his spiritual journey. Out of these two have been promoted to the balkala clad abadhuta order and the rest are making relentless effort for perfection. About 80,000 people have embraced Mahima order under the influence of Kunja Bihari Baba.

The regions Kunja Baba represented as Mahima Abdhuta are Angul, Hindol, Rasol, Kamakshya Nagar, Jiral, Banasiha, Talcher, Parijang, Meramondali, Banarpal, Nalco, Athamalic Raj Kishore Nagar, Bainda, Jarapada, Handapa, Kiakata, Sambalpur, Rairkhole, Kadaligarh, Nakatideula, Bira Maharajpur, Subalaya, Sonepur, Bandh, Phulbani, Tarabha, Binika, Titilagarh, Kanta Banjhi, Banga munda Khaira, Muribahal, Sundhakela,

Patanagarh, Bolangir, Khaparapola, Dhandamunda, Belpara, Farekela, Nayapara, Nuapara, Khariar, Sunapali, Boden, Bhabani patana, Golamunda, Dharmagada, Junagada, Kumbhari, Koshing, Narla, Rampur, Modanpur, Muniguda, Kalampur, Jayapatana, Debhogh, Chandahandi, Nabarangpur Karmunda, Koipad, Bariguma, Jayapur, Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Barngada, Barapali, Paikamal, Padmapur, Bhukta, Sahela, Raipur, Raigarb, Bindra, Nayagada, Phuljhari, Deogarh, Keonjhar, Champua, Jhimpura, Badbil, Anandpur, Suakoti, Mayurbhanja, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Kujang, Athagarh, Tigiria, Baramba, Narasimhapur, Puralia, Bonkuda etc.

The Baba was an enlightened scholar. He knew four languages : Odia, Bengali, Hindi and English, He had earned enormous experience as he travelled several places.

In 1876 Mahima Swami, the founder of Mahima Dharma ended his mundane activities in Joranda Tungi Ashram. A number of Ashramas and temples cropped up in that memorial place. *Sunyamandir, Gadi, Mandir Nitimandir and Dhuni Mandir* were built to treasure Guru Mahima's memory. The Babas built up ashramas for their annual sojourn at Joranda. Latamula Ashram to the west of Natima Bajar in One of the magnificent Ashram mandalas. It adds to the grandeur of Mahima Gadi for its serene atmosphere. During Maghamela good number of devotees take shelter on the campus of Latamula Ashrama. The ashram is full of mango trees and other fruit bearing trees. The ashram owes a lot to the relentless efforts of Kunja Baba.

Ratnamani Baba and Bhagaban Baba were Chief architects of the Latamula Ashram. But Kunja Baba's contribution to this endeavour is commendable. Ratnamani Baba proposed to buy a plot of land for Rs. 60/- (Sixty Rupees) only, to set up the Ashrama. But the Baba did not have that much of money. Kunja Bihari Das gave that money from his personal savings and the plot was bought. The Baba blessed the young follower for his thrift and wisdom. The Latamula Ashram was set up by Ratnamani Baba, but the progress and prosperity of the Ashram has attained today, is the outcome of relentless endavour of Kunja Bihari Baba. Later, extra plots of land have been purchased and annexed to the *ashram*. None can dispute the fact that Kunja Bihari Baba was the sole architect of the Latamula Ashram.

Baba Kunja Bihari was an able organizer. From 1984 to 1991 he was the vice president and form 1991 to 2002 he was the president of Latamula Ashram. He built up all temples and monasteries on the campus of Latamula Ashram.

That great monk breathed his last on 12.04.2002 at Bidyadharpur Mahim Ashram in Cuttack, chanting the name of Mahima Alekh. The Baba was consigned to earth in Rantalei Mahima Ashram in presence of hundreds of mourning devotees. His death caused a gap in Mahima Order hard to be bridged.

Kunja Bihari Baba had kindness for animals; selfless service to humanity and equal approach to all. He set an example for his disciples, "semblance between his words and deeds". The following poem of Bhima Bhoi was essential ideology of Kunja Baba :

He is called a saint :

Who endures like the earth

Utters words of wisdom

And is calm and kind

His wisdom in deep as ocean

And is perfect in wisdom.

His reason is vast like the sky.

That emits Brahma Vakya.

Whatever is uttered is like the Vedas.

He embraces the body and the world as one

And is the greatest of the monks.

He looks like moon upon every one

with kind attention

makes no discrimination

Between the wicked or the saintly.

(Bhajana Mala)

Above all, Kunja Bihari Baba was a multifaceted person. His talent inspired and influenced so many Mahima monks and will remain a source of inspiration for them in all times to come.

(Data used in the essay are based on
a report by Abadhuta Ananda Baba)



BHIMA BHOI: A VOICE OF PROTEST IN PRAYER

Bhima Bhoi was a seer. He could visualise the ultimate reality in his mind's eye. He realised the oneness of beings as the abode of the Real. He identified himself with each of the particles of the creation. So he suffered with the suffering lot. He exalted with the elevated ones but he protested against the selfish ones who enriched themselves at the cost of the innocent multitude. To mitigate the monumental suffering of beings, he adopted a novel method. He prayed to the Almighty Creator to redress this misery exposing the state of beings to Him. He composed innumerable prayer-poems to make mass mind conscious of their own lot. He was a conscious and courageous soul fit to lead a million of men, But he applied the non-violent method to rise up and made no compromise with *status-quo* in the name of culture or religion. He raised his voice against authorities both royal and priestly. He did not spare the divine symbols and agents. He was a votary of Truth. Hence, he spoke against pretention, hypocrisy, superstition and acts unapproved by conscience. He cried for justice as he knew that injustice is remediable and every one should strive for it. In rising against injustice he did not try to spread violence. Rather, he tried hard to change the hearts of the unjust exploiters. He found individual salvation in the endemic salvation. He was altruistic in his approach. So he proposed to barter his soul for universal redemption.

In his oft-quoted quatrain Bhima Bhoi proclaims his life's philosophy:

Praninka arata, dukha apramita
Dekhu dekhu keba sahu
Mojiban pachhe Narka padi thau.
Jagata uddhar heu.

(Stuti Chintamani)

The monumental miseries of beings
How can one witness and endure,
May my soul be condemned to hell
For universal uplift and welfare.

Hence, Bhima raised a relentless revolution for universal uplift and welfare in the way of justice and love. He was startled at the sight of unjust practices of men of different position. The ones who shoulder the responsibility of dispension of justice have turned unjust. Then, what will be the lot of the millions of men ? In another quatrain Bhima Bhoi observes -

Kiba rajaputra, kiba sadhu santha
Sarve heleni durjana
Etini brahmanda sadhibu tu para
Kisa dekhuchhu bhavana.

(Stuti Chintamani)

Both the princes and saints
Have turned wicked,
How would you solve the problems
The process is getting delayed.

Bhima Bhoi's voice may be introspective. It may be termed as a "dialogue with the self." Instead of addressing to the readers he addresses to his Master who

dwells in all the beings animate or inanimate.

His universal vision is ingrained in the following lines:

Sthabaru jangama Kitaru patanga
Chahindele anusari.
Sakala ghatare puri samanare
Nuhen Sana bada Kari.

(Stuti Chintamani)

Wherever I behold, from static to mobile, from the worm to insect, I can't discriminate as He fills all the forms equally .There is no one mean nor great !

This is Bhima Bhoi's vision of universal oneness. Hence he pleads for a classless society. He does not find any reason in dividing men on the basis of caste or class. All are the manifestation of Mahima, the one and indivisible. So all the beings deserve equal treatment. One who believes in this concept attains salvation. One who discriminates fails to attain the supreme bliss. To attain this state of mind the only way is love. Only through love of others one identifies with another being. He shares the enjoyments or sufferings of others through this love. He gives vent to his feelings in the following lines.

Eka Khadagare dasa pancha munda
Chhidai Bharata yuddhe
Areka angaku pade Praharile
E angaku mora badhe.

(Stuti Chintamani)

Soldiers are beheaded without number
In a moment, in the battle field.
I feel hurt whenever
A blow is given to another's body.

This universal love gives shape to Bhima Bhoi's concept of global family. He observes and asserts:

Brahmanda ku Kari achhi ghara bakhuri

(Stuti Chintamani)

I have turned this universe into a single homestead.

Hence, he does not admit racial discrimination. There is no national discrimination in his writings either. There is only one reality. "Man". He declares "man as a speaking animal"

'Bachan bhasila jeeva'

(Stuti Chintamani)

Intellectually a man is superior to baser animals. Baser animals do not have respect or love for others. Only man knows this and has the capacity for sacrifice. Through sacrifice a man claims and enjoys a higher position in the world of beings.

Being intelligent a man is responsible for the preservation of this world. If this globe gets distorted where would he live ? So he declares:

E jana jagata hata hoi gale
Kahin pracharibi muhin ?
Tenu kari sina sriguru payere
Niti Janana Karai.

(Stuti Chintamani)

Where Shall I operate

If this world of men is distorted ?

So do I relentlessly,

Present all this before my Lord.

Bhima Bhoi's poetry has a logical growth. These poems spread conscious efforts for the welfare of mankind through love and non -violence. He prays his Lord God to make this world a better place through eradication of the corrupt practices hither to propagated and established.



BHIMA BHOI: A POET IN REVOLT

Little is known about the personal life of Bhima Bhoi one of the best known poets of Orissa. He has written almost nothing about his whereabouts in his poetic creation save some mysterious suggestions relating to his experience of the spiritual communion. He was a devotee of Mahima Swami and wrote all about Him and His deeds. He broke new grounds in the field of poetry and there is stuff enough in his poetry to prove him the precursor of modern poetry in Orissa. He dared to liberate poetry from the bond of myth. He was a seer of Truth and wanted to establish truth as it is. So his poems became objective and new in appeal. He turned into poetry all that had been taught by Mahima Swami, the propounder of Mahima Dharma as the canon of Mahima Dharma. Thus, Bhima became both a preacher and a poet. He has some such great preachers and poets before him: Nanak and Kabir, benefactors of man. Bhima Bhoi toured about in the woodland of western Orissa to preach this new humanism as a performing Mahimite. He set examples and preached the Mahima Dharma for benefit of man.

The poet's life is mysterious. It is said that baby Bhima was found among palm shrubs at Jatasingha a remote village about 50 km away from the main road by Danara Bhoi and his wife Gurubari. It was early summer and the

issueless couple stumbled on Bhima. Their joy knew no bounds. They carried the baby home and brought him up. The boy was bright in complexion and radiant to look at. He grew up with due care. But poor Danar died young and Gurubari became a helpless young widow. Dhaneswar, Danar's younger brother married Gurubari. The happy couple procured children and Bhrma became unwanted. He was sent to work for rich people in nearby village Kandhara. There he worked for the village money-tender called Sahoo. The Sahoo was hard task master. He did not give food and water sufficient for the young man to subsist on. This gauntia as he was otherwise known engaged Bhima in watching cows and calves. He spent the entire day in the field. Whenever he felt hungry he drank water from the stream. He would like to return home early for food but won't do so as he won't be given water or gruel. He recollected the heart-rendering experience in **Stuti Chintamani**, later:

Looking at the sky I would contemplate

It is not time of return,

why should I go now ?

Food or drinks won't be given.

Thus he spent his life miserably like a musk deer. He waited for someone he did not know about. One day a yogi came to his village. It was a hot summer mid-day. The yogi was Kaupin-clad. He was asking for food and water. Bhima was a kid of about four years. He remembers how he was uttering "dharma" "dharma". The people looked askance but gave nothing. So the

lord left the place. Bhima could not forget that scene through out his life. Rather he gave a lively account of the same in **Stuti Chintamani,** his magnum opus.

Thereafter Bhima Bhoi worked hard to keep his body and soul together. It is said that Bhima worked as a cow boy. He helped village women in husking rice and all such drugery. His hard labour could not help him to lead a decent life. He went from place to place in search of sundry jobs. Rather, he was moving from place to place as a personal work-boy. One day he was returning home in the evening. He could not see things clearly as his eye lids covered his eye-balls. No man had seen his eye balls. So some people accept him as blind, and others, do not. He himself has given statement that support both sides. It is believed that he did not have clear vision when he was keeping the cows. However, he fell in a well without cover. The villagers tried to rescue him with rope or bamboo-ladder. He declined the offer on the plea that he who had dropped him into the well had to rescue him, otherwise he would not budge. So his fellow villagers left him there all alone.

Steadfast Bhima sang a prayer to the Lord. In the mid-part of the night when darkness became deepest Mahima Swami appeared on the spot. He extended His benign foot into the well. Bhima was ecstatic. He caught hold of the foot and adorned his Lord in his first and the best song:

Bandana Padapadmaku

Dhyayee guru payaraku

Dhyayee Swami payaraku

He adored the feet contemplating on the Guru, the Lord, the be all and end all,of his life. The Lord lifted him up and blessed him. Bhima went home back enlightened and he experienced a "sensation sweet" hard to express.

A little later, Bhima shiifted his centre of work from Kandhara to Kankanpada. There he worked for Chaitanya Pradhan who was famous and rich in the area. The Pradhan was a noble soul. Who had read scriptures of all sorts. He would read Puranas in the evening. Bhima listened to him in rapt attention. His memory was so sharp that he could repeat everything the next morning. There Bhima was educated orally by his master.

Chaitanya Pradhan was a man of enlightenment. He had read all the Indian mythologies. He knew the greatness of Mahima Swami, The devoted heart of late Chaitanya Pradhan melted when he came across Mahima Swami. He wanted to be a follower of Mahima Swami. Even he wanted to put on bark. This famous man's fame had spread far and wide. Bhima Bhoi was a born scholar. So he wanted to enjoy his company. What else can be a better way than working as a servant of the man who knew all about Indian scriptures !

Bhima Bhoi sought and got a position in Chaitanya Pradhan's household as a boy at beck and call. He worked throughout the day in the village rice processing unit, cow keeping etc. In the evening he would go to the Bhagabata Tungi and would listen to scholars who sang the scriptures. As a man of spectacular memory he would remember every bit of it. He would sing out it

again on request. Thus Bhima Bhoi was schooled in Indian learning without going to any particular school. He had a meditative mind that worked on the acquired knowledge.

Bhima Bhoi had a great sense of discrimination. He could distinguish the good from the bad, the right from the wrong and above all, the timeless from the temporal. He prayed his lord for this capacity in his magnum opus **Stuti Chintamani** as follows:-

"O Lord, let me select with love, The essential from the residue .May there be a flood of words and meaning Like the Mahanadi in the rains" **(Stuti Chintamani)**

Bijaya Chandra Majumdar has written in his famous treatise on Oriya literature, "Selections from Oriya Literature" that he had believed that Bhima Bhoi was born-blind but later he realised that he became blind in the 2nd phase of his life. But Bhima's own writings give self contradictory statements. At a place he says that he knew more than people with eye could see. He used to look at the sky to know time. He used the imagery of light. He said "darkness disappears at sun-rise". Most people contend that Bhima Bhoi was not born blind. He was born with poor eye sight and became stone blind in course of time. Whatever may be the physical condition of this metaphysical poet, he was a seeker of light for himself and the world at large. So his poetic world is bristled with images of light. He was an advocate of conscience. He called upon his fellowmen and followers to the true path enlightened with conscience.

But Bhima Bhoi adopted a totally new method. He

did not address his followers nor did he ask them to follow his advice. Rather, he told everything to his Lord and prayed for his intervention. We may deem Bhima Bhoi's poems as a dialogue with self. For example when Bhima Bhoi discovered universal social disorder he prayed to his lord:-

O my Lord, Behold how this World is being distorted !

He hinted at the exploiting nature of the priestly and the princely class. They tried to exploit the ignorant people in ways more than one in the name of state - craft or divinity.

Bhima Bhoi came from a lowly social order. He knew all about the suffering of such people. He tried to redeem them personally but failed. As an individual can not go against social order single handed physically. So Bhima Bhoi began to teach people to distinguish the good from the bad. In a couplet he prayed: Lord God enable me to discriminate the right from the wrong (stutichintamani) Bhima Bhoi has stated his poetic theory. He says a poet should be imbued with the sense of love to distinguish the right from the wrong. Without love such endeavours would lead to unrest.

Bhima Bhoi was a devotee par excellence. He was always engrossed in the thought of his guru who was the beginning and end of his life. He thought of Him, in season and out of season. He considered the world as the manifestation of his unmanifested Guru Brahma. He knew that Brahma was shapeless. So he found the shapeless in all shapes.

Bhima Bhoi was a passionate poet. He responded to all the experiences. Keats- like he says, "O life for sensation rather than thought". So he was angry and pathetic at the same time. He complained and prayed to his lord to mitigate the sufferings of his fellow beings. Thus he would be able to serve the lot of the humanity. Each unit of life was important for him. So he paid due regard to the smallest of beings.The dominant minority took Bhima Bhoi otherwise. They i.e. the kings, priests who made mass-ignorance their stepping stone to success barred the progress of Bhima's philosophical teaching. Bhima had nothing new to teach. He had to revive people's faith in truth and non-violence; concepts as old as hills' as Mahatma Gandhi had observed. He made people conscious and crave their places in the universe. So he prayed his lord to enlighten one and all. In Bhagvad Geeta Sri Krishna emphatically says that action is the virtue of every individual, but it is knowledge that distinguishes the right action from the wrong. Likewise Bhima Bhoi sought enlightenment for every one, big or small.

Mahima Swami embodies enlightenment of all sorts. He emits glory and the beings in this universe are imbued in that glory. All beings have to be aware of this.

Bhima Bhoi made a frantic effort to make human beings realistic.He contended he should be just and have conformity with the rules of good nature, Dharma.

Bhima Bhoi was a blessed soul. So the Lord gave him consciousness and he catered that among his fellow beings. To-day Mahima Dharma has become the **Loka**

Dharma as it is a conscious spiritual way of life.

In every poem he wrote, Bhima made an appeal to his Master Mahima Alekha for redemption of Man. He prayed for universal salvation at the expense of his personal weal.

But Bhima's sole intention was to infuse energy in to a people already on the verge of decay and death. Foreign misrule, external aggression and fanaticism contributed largely to it.

Mahima Alekh blessed Bhima Bhoi with extra-ordinary poetic prowess. So he could create literature of such an order that has not been properly shared nor intellectually reached.

Bhima Bhoi woke up, to rebel against all that was nasty and brutish. He wanted to have a novel method. He prayed to his lord to redress all ailments of man. He believed in the power of prayer and therefore prayed to Brahma all his life. His bhajans are the voice of his soul. He rose in revolution in them while praying. Bhima Bhoi was a *bhakta*, who sacrificed all his well being for salvation of mankind. He did not claim anything personally, but he fought against anguish inflicted upon man. So, Bhima Bhoi was more a public person than private. He wrought a place for himself in the social firmaments of Orissa. He could reach his fellow men with his bhajans and janans. Both forms of poetry were pleasant and Bhima pleased all. His was a revolutionary heart. He fought against all ends with the weapon of love. So he used music as its weapon. As a poet and a

lover, he did not wish-ill of anyone. He loved writing. He saw the invisible and attained the unattainable. We should remember that he loved Gods as Supreme and things are done as per His will .

Mahima Dharma is the other name of revolution. It is an unconformist approach to social order. Bhima Bhoi being its first poet could not accept whatever was there. He frankly asserted to create a new order.

Mahima means "magnificence" and Mahima Dharma in a literal sense is magnificence of all the cults. It is abstract and hence people deem it *sunya*. Bhima Bhoi tried to capture this *sunyahbrahma* in his own way. Prior to him there were poets who had written poems on *Sunya Brahma*. Achyutanada was his predecessor. Bhima Bhoi was aware of the futility of human existence; he was aware of its majesty too. He knew the painful ordeals undertaken for survival. So he always tried for redemption of man.

Mahima dharma played a pivotal role in Bhima's life . This needs to be discussed in great detail. It is a religion that worships no icon with objects as offering.

That was a time when the people of Orissa were passing through the untold misery in shape of hunger and thirst. They were being exploited variously. Mahima Swami rescued them.

Bhima Bhoi observed all that from close quarters and complained. The strong ones punished him. So he mused and expressed his anguish in poetry.

"Who will help me if you desert me my Lord ? How long will you keep me inside the deep forest ? I don't find any way out ?" Bhima made frantic appeal to Lord Mahima Alekh.

The social frame work around him was so complicated that he could not find a way out. So he prayed to his Lord for salvation. Lord's grace helped him to recover.

Bhima was a voice of rebellion. He followed no trodden path. He wrote what he felt proper. Several people rebelled against him but he spoke the truth loudest. The voice of anger and love, protest and prayer, reaction and reconciliation have been so beautifully blended in the poems of Bhima Bhoi that it is hard to say what sort of a poet was he ! He sang : "Thrilled in love, tear in eyes and restless in anger.

I say my prayer..............."

He combined all the emotions in his poetry.

Bhima knew the Lord only matters. Despite this knowledge how could he go astray ? Any way he prays his master to save him at all costs.

Mahima Alekh is the only master of whom we are servants. The Lord Alekh blesses us as we seek his help. The Lord blessed Bhima.

Mahima Alekh blesses one and all and I think I may not be excluded He is -all embracing and He will save and bless one and all including me.

Bhima loved singing the glory of his Lord, the Lord of the world. He deemed Him as the sustainer of the

animate and the inanimate at large, he rebelled against one and all who went against the Lord's Creation.

Bhima Bhoi hails from western Orissa who writes in chaste Oriya. He wrote pure Knowledge the like of which can not be traced back in any Oriya writing. However, Bhima wrote something which is akin to the contents of the *Prasthan Trayee* : the three wings of the Vedanta. Even some lines composed by Bhima Bhoi may be the echo of the Upanishada, Geeta or Brahma Sutra. It is a matter of wonder how could this unlettered tribal boy read all the shastras.Of course, he denied he had gone through the Shastras. But he had heard them sung. He himself sang the song of the soul that assured the people salvation:

"Arise O' mind and have the vision of Reality and you shall have salvation."



IMPRINT OF MAHIMA DHARMA ON THE SILVER CITY, CUTTACK

The silver city, Cuttack bears the imprints of the sacred footsteps of prophets and seers in so large a number that it is hard to catalogue them completely. In its one thousand-year-old history, cuttack welcomed Sri Chaitanya, Guru Nanak, Goswami Tulasidasa and many other holy men, who traversed the city on their way to Puri, the meeting ground of almost all the seers of the world. But Mahima Swami traversed Cuttack leaving Puri for the forest covered region of Orissa. While Gurudwara at Kalia boda, the temple of Gadagadeswar, the foot prints Mahammad at Kadam Rassul, preserve the memory of the immortal souls, a large number of Alekh Tungis (inns for the mobile mendicants of Mahima Order) remind. Mahima Swami's sojourn at Cuttack in early nineteenth century.

Mahima Swami, the founder of Mahima Dharma manifested in Puri as Dhulia Gosain in the year 1826. There after he moved towards Kapilas, halting at places like Arka Gumpha (near Konark), Khandagiri and Andharua and finally reached Cuttack via Naraj in the thirties of the nineteenth Century. As a founder of mobile mendicant order He did not put up at any

particular place for more than a night in a Village. So He did not put up at Cuttack for longer time. It is heard that He ferried across the Mahanadi so as to reach khuntuni, at Bidanasi, Cuttack.

The followers of Mahima Swami began to frequent the places once occupied by Him and the lucky devotees built up tungi and Ashrams for the mendicants Such shelters of dateless foundations are there at Bidanasi, However, the thatched tungis have been transformed into buildings in course of times. There are three tungi ashramas in Bidanasi itself that preserve the memory of Mahima Swami.

Brahmalina Viswanath Baba, the first presiding abadhuta of Satya Mahima Dharma Parichalana Samaj made Cuttack the centre of his spiritual endeavour. He put up at Chandini Chowk Mahima Ashram several times and attracted the intelligentsia of contemporary Orissa with his spiritual magnetism. He set up Mahima Dharmalochana samiti there at Cuttack in early thirties a hundred years after Mahima Swami's visit to Cuttack.

Mahima Dharmalochana samiti attracted illustrious oriya schloars like Dr. Panakrishna Parija, Prof. Artaballav Mohanty, Sj Gopal Chandra Praharaj, Dr. Mayadhar Mansinha, Sj Bichhananda Charan Pattnaik, Dr. Sadasiva Mishra, Dr. Radhanath Rath, Prof. Satrughna Nath to name only a few to its fold. They became its office bearers and worked hard for publication of Mahima Philosophy

and Literature that contributed to propagation of the humanistic order inside and outside the state.

Later, this Mahima Dharmalochona samaj was reconstituted as Mahima Dharmalochana Parishada under the direct instruction of Brahmalina Viswanath Baba in 1992 with Dr. Radhanath Rath as the Chair person and Prof. Satrughna Nath as the secretary. prof. Sarbeswar Dash, Sri Gopinath Das, Dr. Kunja Behari Tripathy, Sri Shyam Sundar Padhi, Dr. Harihar Mahapatra. Justice Ranganath Mishra Prof. Baishnab Charan Samal and many other scholars, including this writer. Philosophers and litterateurs became its members. Today the Parishad works on the Chandini Chowk. Patapur Mahima Ashram campus with its own office building, library and publication wing. **Mahima Taranga** and **Samarpana**, two annual journals are being brought out every Magha and Baisákh Guru purnima respectively. Devotees throng the place every month to participate in Sarana Darshan and Sadhu bhiksha (collective dinings).

This Chindini Chowk Patapura Mahima Ashrama complex near Chandini Chowk Square, Cuttack has greater attraction for the devotees and adorers of Mahima Dharma as it is the *Samadhi Pitha* of Viswanath Baba, the Grand seer of Mahima Dharma. Viswanath Baba's mortal remains had been consigned to earth here in 1992. It should be noted that the Baba had organised

Mahima Dharma Sammilani for three days here and sanyasins and devotees of all corners of this state participated in it. On Baisakh Purnima morning at the end of the 3 day assembly the Baba announced his desire for departure and breathed his last. The devotees assemble here every Baisakh Purnima to pay their homage to the memory of the immortal. A magnificent memorial structure has been built up there.

Besides Chandini Chowk, there are Mahima tungi Ashramas all over the city. There are old Mahima ashramas at Khatbin Sahi and Kafla Square. New ashramas are coming up there at Markat Nagar (CDA) and on the south Bank of Mahanadi near chahata, adjacent to Rama Mandir.

Vidyadharpur Mahima Ashram is well known in the eastern part of the city. Brahma Abadhuta Bhakta Baba founded this ashram and organised Mahima Mela every year. There live a good member of Mahima followers around the ashram. To-day, this part of the city is known as Mahima Nagar. The mortal remains of the Baba has been consigned to earth on the compound of the ashram. People assemble in good number and atleast, once a month on the Gurupurnima and once a year in Phalguna to mark the Baba's attainment of salvation. The books written by Bhakta Baba contribute largely to Mahima literature as well as oriya literature.

There are many other tungi-ashramas in the city too. Little away from Vidyadharpur, there is an ashram at Nua

sahi. Beside the ring road at Jobra, there is a Mahima Ashrama. This tungi is adored for its association with Brahmalina Lochanananda Baba and Brahmalina Satyababi Baba. Devotees collect themselves here to offer usual Sarana darshan and light up Akhanda Ghrutabati on Gurupurnimas.

The interior of the city is not devoid of Mahima Ashrama. There is one Mahima Ashram inside the Badambari area. It makes room for wandering mendicants who go on propagating Mahima order.

A good number of citizens of Cuttack have accepted Mahima Dharma as their way of life. They put on, **geru bastra** (saffron cloth), offer Sarana Darshana in the morning and evening and take their dinner before the sun down.

Every year on the Magha purnima the Brahma Dhuni manifests thousand lamps at Joranda Mahima Gadi. Thousands of devotees proceed from and via Cuttack to the centre of Mahima Dharma. The millennium old Cuttack city is proud of its participation in Mahima Movement.

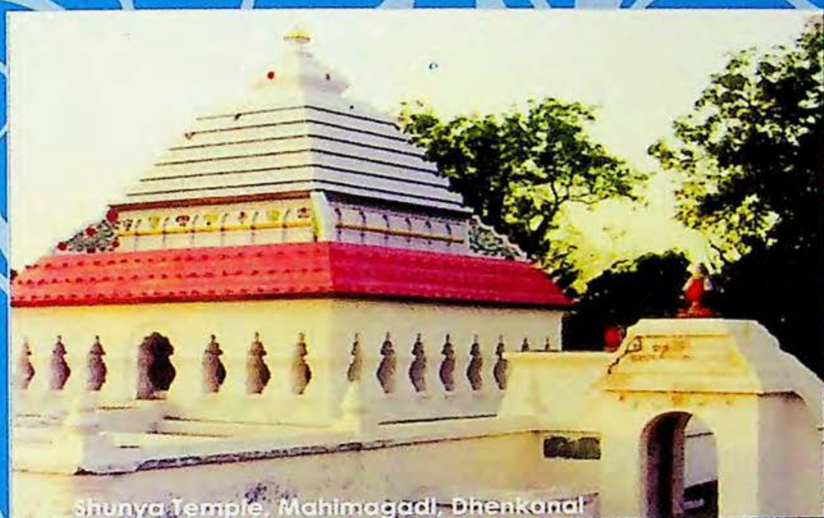


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N.B. - Translation of Bhima Bhoi's Lines are by the author.




Shunya Temple, Mahimagadi, Dhenkanal

